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THE CHURCH, THE STATE, AND THE POOR

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A SERIES OF HISTORICAL SKETCHES

BY

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PREFACE

TO study history, it has been well said, is to enlarge experience. To know what has been attempted in the past, and with what results, should be a guide to present action. It may be maintained that the conditions of the present are so different from those of any previous age, that to appeal to the past is useless. But if conditions have changed, human nature is very much the same as it was either fifteen hundred, five hundred, or one hundred years ago. And the problems of poverty are, as a rule, much more problems of character than problems of circumstances.

Again, the evil conditions of large masses of poor people in England to-day are mainly due to a want of foresight and wisdom on the part of those who were in authority, both in Church and State, during the first hundred years of the "Industrial Revolution." Unfortunately, from ignorance of the past, we are actually repeating methods which have been proved to be useless, if not worse. We are not only perpetuating, but even continuing to create, conditions which a knowledge of history shows us must inevitably lead to disaster.

To help to supply a knowledge of the various ways in which at different times both Church and State have attempted to deal with the problems of poverty, and of the results of their efforts, is the object of this book.

W. E. C.

ST. ALBANS,
March, 1914.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	PAGE I
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY CHURCH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER III

FROM CONSTANTINE THE GREAT TO CHARLEMAGNE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER V

THE MIDDLE AGES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER VI

THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER VII

THE REFORMATION: LUTHER AND CALVIN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79
------------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER VIII

THE REIGNS OF THE TUDOR SOVEREIGNS: HENRY VIII. TO ELIZABETH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	93
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	108
-------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	124
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XI

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION—I.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	140
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XII

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION—II.	-	-	-	-	-	PAGE
						156

CHAPTER XIII

THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1834	-	-	-	-	-	174
----------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XIV

THE RISE OF COLLECTIVISM	-	-	-	-	-	190
--------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST FIFTY YEARS	-	-	-	-	-	207
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----

INDEX	-	-	-	-	-	221
-------	---	---	---	---	---	-----

INDEX OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES	-	-	-	-	-	224
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----

Insert these in not-Session
62

THE CHURCH, THE STATE, AND THE POOR

A SERIES OF HISTORICAL SKETCHES

I.

INTRODUCTION.

1. *Moral Problems.*

WE are constantly being told, and apparently with much truth, that no subject is of wider interest at the present time than that which is usually described as "the social problem." The term is an unfortunate one because it is so vague; and vagueness of terminology is generally either an excuse for loose thinking, or leads to looseness of thought. Actually what should be meant by "the social problem" is two very closely related problems: first, that of right relationships—how to secure that the relationships between individuals, classes, and even nations, may be what they should be; secondly, that of the right use of the possessions and opportunities of life. Both these problems are, of course, ultimately problems of character, and if they are to be satisfactorily and permanently solved, they must be approached from the point of view of character. In short, they are *moral* problems. And this is why it is the Church's duty to do what in her lies to help to solve them.

A very little reflection will show that these are actually the two problems which enter into all our dealings with the poor, into all our attempts to help them, or to assist them to help themselves. Our relationships to them and their relationships

to us and to one another must first be rightly conceived, and then rightly discharged. Also our opportunities, including the physical, intellectual, and spiritual possessions of life, must be rightly used toward them ; we must also try to teach them to use their opportunities with true wisdom.

The chief work of the Church is to be a witness or exponent, in life and teaching, of the Christian faith—that is, of the doctrines or principles of Christianity. The object of this and the following articles is to try to show, by a series of brief historical sketches, the importance of a firm conviction of the truth of the Christian Creed—the sum total of the doctrines of Christianity—as the only adequate inspiration and guide to any effort to solve the two problems I have already described.

As an example of what I mean, let us consider the problem of right relationships in the light of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Because I believe in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, I believe that within the Godhead there exist certain primary or fundamental and Divine relationships,¹ and that therefore these (as being within the Godhead) are infinitely sacred. Also, because I believe that man was made in the image of God,² and that man was made a social being with social capacities,³ I am justified in seeing a likeness between Divine and human relationships. Hence all *legitimate* human relationships are sacred. Thus one chief object of the work and teaching of the Church must be to try to make all legitimate human relationships actually what they should be.

As a second example, we will regard the use of the opportunities, including the possessions of life, in the light of the doctrine of the Incarnation. What is the meaning, or, shall I say, the chief issue, of the Incarnation? Is it not the sanctification of everything upon which human nature depends and which ministers to its right or true development? And this will include not only all the opportunities of life, but also all the physical materials, as well as the physical, intellectual, and moral forces of the universe.

¹ John v. 20, xv. 26, xvi. 13.

² Gen. i. 26 ; Eph. iv. 24.

³ Gen. ii. 18.

As I wish to pursue the historical method, I may here point out a connection between the influence of two great Christian teachers and the two doctrines I have just cited. That the Church in our own country to-day is taking a far wider and deeper, and, I would add, a far more spiritual interest in the welfare of the people, and especially in the welfare of the poor, is largely due to the teaching of Professor F. D. Maurice and of Bishop Westcott. But to what, more than to anything else, is the great, and, I believe, the still growing, influence of these two leaders due? To this: that both approached the subject from the point of view of *Christian doctrine*. The social teaching of Professor Maurice arose from his profound belief in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and his equally profound insight into the practical issues of this doctrine. Similarly, the social teaching of Bishop Westcott arose chiefly from his insight into the meaning of the Incarnation and its inevitable consequences.

Both Maurice and Westcott were great theologians, and both were extremely able Christian philosophers *before* they became Christian social teachers. I mention these facts here simply as examples of the truth of the thesis I have already implied, that what is termed Christian social work (and of this work, that on behalf of the poor is the chief part), if it is to be wisely done and with permanently good results, must be the issue of a real faith in the whole Christian Creed. Of the actual work done by these two great teachers I hope to speak in later chapters.

2. *The Old Testament.*

In a historical survey of the Church's efforts to help the poor, and of her teaching upon the duty of making efforts to do this, where should be our starting-point? "With the New Testament," would at first sight seem to be the natural reply. But actually we must go farther back than this. I have shown elsewhere¹ that if we would have an adequate conception of Christianity, we must not regard it as beginning with the coming

¹ "Social Relationships in the Light of Christianity" (Hulsean Lectures), p. 94 *et seq.*

in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world. The Incarnation is not the *first* event, it is rather the greatest event in the history of Christianity.¹ For the Incarnation there was a long Divinely ordered preparation ; and the issues of it, though immeasurably great, are even yet incomplete. Among the greatest factors in the preparation for the Incarnation stands the teaching of the Hebrew Prophets. In this teaching the need of right relationships between class and class, and the necessity for a wise discharge of the responsibility of opportunities and possessions, hold a prominent place. A great part of the contents of such books as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah deals with the duty of social righteousness, with the claims of social justice. Hence a satisfactory answer to the question, What is the teaching of Christianity upon our duty to the poor? must, at any rate, take account of the teaching of the Prophets of the Old Testament.² It cannot, I think, be denied that Christ assumed in His hearers a knowledge of this teaching—in fact, that He based His own teaching upon it as a sufficient foundation. He assumed it as certainly as He assumed a knowledge of the Ten Commandments and of the obligation to keep them. Only when all this is remembered will the wonderful completeness of Christ's teaching be recognized. St. John the Baptist was the last representative of the old line of the Prophets of Israel, and everyone will admit that his work was essential for the work of Christ. But the Baptist's message, as given in detail in the third chapter of St. Luke, is just a series of demands for social justice.

I am not going to dwell upon the teaching of the Old Testament Prophets. All I would say in reference to it here is, that when we speak of "the social teaching of Christianity,"

¹ Westcott, "Study of the Gospels," p. 47.

² "Our Lord deliberately took His stand on the Old Testament. . . . Our Lord assumed all that the Old Testament laid down. The Law and the Prophets had been struggling after the establishment of a great social system on a strong moral basis. The Old Testament is full of teaching about wages and human life, full of doctrines of social and individual righteousness. . . . Christ could assume all this, and He did assume it. He takes it for granted. It is the point at which He starts." (From a recent address by the Bishop of Oxford.)

their teaching must be included as an essential part of this. And as Christ assumed a knowledge of their teaching in His hearers, so must those who profess to work in His Name be careful to see that not only do they possess this knowledge, but that they are careful in their dealings with others to act according to this teaching.

3. *The New Testament.*

The social teaching of the New Testament has of recent years been so fully treated that there is no need for me to dwell upon it at any length. There are, however, a few points upon which it seems to be important that stress should be laid, and therefore that attention should be called to them.

First, in our Lord's teaching as given in the Gospels. Here I would notice four :—

1. When He spoke of the blessing of poverty,¹ we must not imagine that He was thinking of the kind of poverty that meets us daily in the slums of our great cities, and against whose causes and results we are continually waging war. Much more probably the words were addressed to those who "belonged to what we should call the well-to-do artisan class, with excellent prospects, open-air life, hard work, . . . with the consciousness that by an honest day's work they could earn a good day's wage . . . who could pray, 'Give me day by day the bread for to-morrow,' with the sure sense that they were praying for something within the reach of those who would work, and could trust in the ordinary order of the Divine Providence."² Have we a single trace in the Gospels, in Palestine,³ of that hopeless and often helpless and rightly-termed "degrading" poverty of which our own country offers so many examples at the present moment? At the same time we must remember our Lord's definite injunctions to alleviate every kind of misfortune which prevents people living a full and thoroughly useful life.⁴

2. Christ's conception of life is full and complete. He says: "I came that they may have life."⁵ He does not speak of

¹ Luke vi. 20.

² From an address by the Bishop of Oxford.

³ Luke xv. 14 refers to a "far country." ⁴ Matt. x. 8. ⁵ John x. 10.

physical, and intellectual, and moral, and spiritual life. He knows that for its fulness each of these factors of life is largely dependent upon the fulness of all the others. He views life synthetically—*i.e.*, as a whole, and not analytically, as we are apt to do. Christ is essentially the “Life-giver” in the most comprehensive sense of the word. He bestows physical health, intellectual wealth, and the highest moral power. To use a modern philosophical term, Christ is an “Interactionist.” Under present conditions He teaches the interdependence of the spiritual and the physical, and of which His own incarnate life is the outstanding example and witness. Consequently, Christ teaches the need of adequate sustenance for the *whole* of human nature, if the true work and entire purpose of life is to be accomplished. A careful study of the Lord’s Prayer, especially of the connection between its successive clauses, will prove this.¹

3. Christ teaches the immense importance of a suitable environment for the true development of life. This is the lesson of the Parable of the Sower, the first and most fully recorded of His parables. In the statement of the parable the failure or success of the embryonic life, or that which contains the life-principle, to fulfil its purpose is entirely attributed to differences of environment. In the explanation of the parable the same truth is again emphasized, but it is somewhat differently conceived. While in the first the environment may be said to be the individual nature into which the life-principle enters, in the second it is the environment of the hearer with the seed implanted in him.²

I am well aware of the tendency at the present time to lay a disproportionate stress upon the influence of environment, with the consequence that the sense of personal responsibility is weakened and self-effort is discouraged. But there is a great difference between doing this and attaching a *due* importance to

¹ Maurice’s “Sermons on the Lord’s Prayer” were published during the troublous times of 1848.

² Matt. xiii. 20 : ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη σπαρείς, οὗτός ἐστιν κ.τ.λ. ; Luke viii. 12 : οἱ δὲ παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν κ.τ.λ.

environment. To-day there is certainly one school of social workers who fail to attach even a sufficient importance to this factor in the problem. This being so, it is essential that we should remind ourselves that while Christ does not over-estimate, neither does He under-estimate, this factor. He attaches to circumstances their proper weight, and evidently in His opinion this is not a light one.

When we turn from the Gospels to the Acts and Epistles, and see the organized Christian society at work, we find the two-fold problem of right relationships and the proper use of possessions at once confronting those in authority. But we also find the great leaders of the Church acting in each difficulty as it arose, strictly in accordance with the principles either enunciated or assumed by Christ. In fact, the social teaching of the second part of the New Testament may be regarded as simply the practical application to definite cases of the principles laid down by Christ.

It is important to remember that both the first recorded dissension and the first recorded sin among the members of the Church arose in connection with the subject with which we are dealing. The way in which the dissension is dealt with is extremely instructive. I refer more particularly to the *qualifications* which those who were to deal with the matter must possess. These are three: (1) They must have an unsullied reputation, their character and conduct must be beyond accusation;¹ (2) they must be full of the [Holy] Spirit, they must be really religious men, under the highest inspiration and guidance;² (3) they must be "full of wisdom,"³ they must be "skilful" through recognizing the necessity of obeying the Divine laws which govern human and so social welfare. Here we have clearly laid down once for all the essential qualifications of those who are to be responsible agents in what we may term the social work of the Church.

¹ Acts vi. 3: ἄνδρας ἐξ ὑμῶν μαρτυρομένους.

² πλήρεις Πνεύματος.

³ καὶ σοφίας. On the Biblical meaning of this word see my "Pastoral Teaching of St. Paul," p. 358 *et seq.*

The incident of Ananias and Sapphira is not less important. Their punishment was severe because their sin was not only so great, it was also so comprehensive, and might so easily become epidemic.¹ Their sin consisted in their desire to be regarded as saintly without the cost of self-sacrifice. They desired to be held in high repute, and at the same time to give way to avarice. To take an adequate part in the social work of Christianity demands a much higher degree of self-sacrifice (and that not only, indeed not chiefly, in money) than most people deem necessary. It is easy to simulate, and so to obtain, a reputation for desiring to do good.

One very important lesson to be learnt from the Acts is, that frequently the bitterest opposition is roused against Christian work because this endangers and diminishes nefarious pecuniary gains or interests. It is when these are lost or jeopardized that the most bitter persecution ensues. St. Paul experienced this both at Philippi² and at Ephesus.³ Now, one chief part of our work among the poor is to remove temptations which are placed before them—*e.g.*, to intemperance and impurity, by means of which other people enrich themselves—*i.e.*, through the poor being led to spend on these temptations their hardly-earned money. Frequently to-day the chief opposition to Christian social work emanates from those who have invested their capital⁴ in these degrading trades, and who see that as this work prospers their returns diminish.

Though there are many other passages in the Acts to which I should like to draw attention, I will mention only one, and that very briefly. It is not always remembered that it was upon a distinctly philanthropic mission that St. Paul visited Jerusalem for the last time, and in fulfilling which he risked his life.⁵ I only cite this to show of how important a nature he regarded

¹ "Ananias has a great many descendants. . . . If they were all swept out of the Church as he was, there would be a number of pews occupied by 'leading citizens' empty and hung with black" (Dr. Maclaren, *in loc.*).

² Acts xvi. 19 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, xix. 26 *et seq.*

⁴ Workers in the temperance cause especially must be prepared for this opposition.

⁵ Acts xxiv. 17: "I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings."

this part of his work, a fact to which ample witness is borne in his epistles.

The social teaching in the apostolical epistles is very full, but here again I must dwell briefly upon only a few points. What must be chiefly remembered is that everywhere it will be found that, directly or indirectly, Christian social duties are taught as simply the inevitable issues of a belief in definite Christian doctrines or principles; they are regarded as the natural results of these.

The incarnate life of Christ upon earth was one consistent expression of a combination of two great principles—the inspiration of love and the responsibility of stewardship. The magnificent social teaching in Rom. xii. and xiii. is really an application of the principle of complete self-sacrifice (or love) demanded in xii. 1. But this verse was evidently written under the inspiration of xi. 36: “For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things,” and also of the appeal in the words, “by the mercies of God”—that is, by the tendernesses, the practical evidences, of the Divine Love. But this is the love which unites the Persons of the Trinity within Itself, and is the essential attitude of the Trinity towards man, as revealed in the infinite sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, a sacrifice in which each Person in the Trinity shares.

The so-called practical teaching in the three last chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians is (as in Rom. xii.) introduced by the word “therefore,” which must point back to the doctrinal teaching, the principles, enunciated in the first three chapters. And even in these so-called practical chapters we constantly find St. Paul falling back upon some great doctrine as the source of an exhortation.

No sayings of St. Paul’s are more frequently quoted than that which runs, “If any man will not work, neither let him eat,”¹ and that about not being “weary in well doing.”² But how many who quote these remember that both are prefaced not only by the words “we command you in the Name of the Lord

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 10.

² *Ibid.*, iii. 13.

Jesus"¹ (which must mean all that the Lord Jesus may and ought to be to us), but that in each case the word "brethren" is also prefixed? It is in this word "brethren" and in the term "the Name of the Lord Jesus" that the appeal to principle is seen. Work, and especially work for others, is a sacred duty, a responsibility, because "My Father worketh until now and I work";² and not because of any utilitarian reason, but because we must do the will of our Father Who worketh, and copy the example of our Brother in Whom our right to the term "brethren" lies.

Similarly, the social teaching of the First Epistle of St. Peter is everywhere referred back to great principles—*e.g.*, to the principle of love, of humility, or of stewardship, each of which is a principle which governed the actions of Christ Himself. Then the responsibilities, the mutual services of a corporate life, are enjoined because God did not purchase for Himself a number of isolated individuals, but "a people,"³ who as a people are to give the witness which only a corporate life can give, and which is the most powerful and convincing of all forms of witness. Our Lord stated that it was the mutual behaviour to each other of those who professed to follow Him that should prove their right to be termed His disciples.⁴

I pass to the Epistle of St. James. Its special key-note is struck in the fifth verse in the words, "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God." Wisdom, which is the skilful conduct of life, comes from the revealed will of God. Wrong conduct, and this will cover both wrong relationships and the wrong use of possessions, is a transgression against the eternal Divine law of righteousness. The man who would "be blessed in his doing" (and of this "doing" social intercourse is a large part) will be a careful student and follower of this law, which, so far as it is concerned with the treatment of our fellow-men, is gathered up in the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Where this precept is kept there will be no oppression of the poor. Jealousy and faction offend against the ideal wisdom, that which has a heavenly origin. Pride is yet another offence

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 6, 12.

² John v. 17.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

⁴ John xiii. 35.

against the eternal law of righteousness. I need not go farther, for it is clear that in this epistle, if from a somewhat different point of view, we have the same lesson—viz., the inspiration and guidance of social conduct by great and eternal Divine principles.

Thus the social teaching of the New Testament is that right conduct consists in obedience to the Divine Will ; and the Divine Will is expressed in the life and teaching of Christ, Who is the wisdom of God—that is, the revealed Will of God manifested in a human life which, if truly individual, was also concerned from first to last in the fulfilment of social duties—a life whose primary aim was to establish a right relationship between man and God, and then to get men through their sanctification by His Spirit to use aright—that is, with a full sense of high stewardship—all the gifts and opportunities with which God had entrusted them.

II.

THE EARLY CHURCH.

IN this chapter I purpose to deal briefly with the philanthropic work of the Early Church—that is, during the period extending from the close of the New Testament to, say, the end of the third century. I do not intend to discuss at length disputed points of Church organization—*e.g.*, to what extent the various officials of the Church combined economic with spiritual functions; for instance, how far the Bishops were responsible for the distribution of the alms of the faithful, at what period this responsibility began to be general, and when it ceased to be so.¹ Not that such questions are unimportant, but they are beside my present immediate purpose. What I would rather do is to try to show for what particular classes of people the Church considered herself to be responsible, and consequently to what objects her funds were specially devoted.

It has been maintained, and with a considerable measure of truth, that by an outsider the Church might in those days have been regarded as a benefit society, the members of which were united by certain definite religious convictions. Certainly the philanthropic side of the Church's work during this period was an extremely important factor in the sum total of her energies.² I need not remind my readers that, owing to the careful investigations of many competent scholars, our knowledge of the nature of the Church's activities during this period has much increased.

¹ *ποιμαίνειν*, in Acts xx. 28, may have a temporal as well as a spiritual reference. Cf. Jude 12; 1 Tim. iii. 3. See Harnack, "Mission and Expansion of Christianity," vol. i., p. 157; Uhlhorn, "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," p. 161: "The relief of the poor was more and more concentrated in the person of the bishop"; yet see p. 123.

² Harnack, "Expansion," vol. i., p. 149.

New materials have been brought to light, and old materials have been both studied and interpreted with much greater care.¹

Upon one point I must again insist, because this is my chief object in all I am writing—namely, that we cannot separate the practical life of the Church from her doctrinal convictions. We cannot do this in any period of the Church's history. The study of doctrine and the study of conduct or ethics must be pursued together. While the doctrine believed inspires and rules the conduct, the actual conduct is not only the best of all explanations given to the doctrine, it is actually the proof of the sincerity of the doctrine professed. The creed of those days was not formulated as it was by the councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, but the principles or doctrines taught by Christ, in which that creed was implicitly contained, were the foundation and rule of the Church's life. I refer to the principles enunciated in such sayings as these: "One is your teacher, and ye are all brethren; and call no man your father on the earth; for One is your Father which is in heaven. . . . He that is greatest among you shall be your servant"²; and also: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."³

Two very striking testimonies to the way in which these principles were obeyed may be given. Neither are from Christians—indeed, both are from men who regarded Christianity from a very unsympathetic point of view. The first is from Lucian, the well-known author of the "Dialogues," who writes thus of the mutual relationships existing between members of the Church: "Their original law-giver had taught them that they were all brethren, one of another. . . . They become incredibly alert when anything occurs which affects their common interests. On such occasions"—when a possibility arises of their rendering useful service to their own members—"no expense is grudged."⁴

¹ The nature and wealth of these may be seen in the notes to Harnack's chapter on "The Gospel of Love and Charity," "Expansion," vol. i., p. 147 *et seq.*

² Matt. xxiii. 8 *et seq.*

³ John xiii. 34.

⁴ Harnack, "Expansion," vol. i., p. 149.

The second testimony is that of the Emperor Julian, who, though belonging to the fifth century, evidently speaks of the Christian system as this had long been in existence. Of Julian, Harnack writes: "The excellence of the Church's charitable system, the deep impression made by it, and the numbers it won over to the faith, find their best voucher in the action of Julian the Apostate, who attempted an exact reproduction of it in that artificial creation of his, the Pagan State-Church, in order to deprive the Christians of this very weapon. The imitation had, of course, no success."¹ Harnack also gives these two quotations from a letter of Julian's: (1) "These godless Galileans feed not only their own poor, but ours; our poor lack our care." (2) "This godlessness (*i.e.*, Christianity) is mainly furthered by its philanthropy towards strangers, and its careful attention to the bestowal of the dead." In the failure of Julian's project we have another proof that the Christian system of philanthropy was no mere carefully thought-out utilitarian scheme. It was the expression of a deep-seated belief in certain doctrines and principles, especially of a belief in the binding nature of such commands of Christ as to "love one another, even as I have loved you";² and to "be merciful even as your Father in heaven is merciful."³

The principal source of the charity distributed in the Early Church was the offerings made at the weekly Sunday Eucharist.⁴ Of the collection and distribution of the voluntary contributions to the funds of the Church, Justin Martyr writes: "The well-to-do and willing give as each purposes; the collection is deposited with the president, who succours orphans, widows, those who are in want owing to sickness or any other cause, those in prison, and those on a journey."⁵ The administration of the alms apparently lay finally with the president;⁶ but in the distribution of these he would be assisted by the deacons, who would be expected to be

¹ Harnack, "Expansion," vol. i., pp. 161, 162. Cf. "Cambridge Medieval History," vol. i., p. 108 *et seq.*

² John xiii 34.

³ Luke vi. 36.

⁴ Harnack, "Expansion," vol. i., p. 155 *et seq.*; Uhlhorn, "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," p. 141 *et seq.*

⁵ "Apolog.," c. 6.

⁶ Harnack, vol. i., p. 157, note 1.

familiar with the circumstances—that is, with the needs—of each member of the community.

Harnack states¹ that there were ten objects upon which the funds at the disposal of the Church seem generally to have been expended: (1) The maintenance of officials and teachers,² especially where their work for the Church withdrew these from their ordinary avocation.³ (2) The support of widows and orphans, who were from the first special objects of philanthropy.⁴ (3) The sick, the infirm, and the disabled. These, again, have always been objects of solicitude; moreover, the work which Christ Himself did on their behalf gave them a very special claim to help. (4) Prisoners and those languishing in the mines (to which many of those suffering for their faith were committed). The cruelty with which those in such positions were in those days treated is notorious. Both these classes must be visited and consoled, and gifts of food were often taken to them; not infrequently prisoners were ransomed by a payment of money.⁵ (5) The burial of the poor; for in those days special importance was attached to an honourable burial, and to see to this became one of the tasks of the deacons.⁶ (6) The (occasional) freeing of slaves—though this was the exception rather than the rule—as part of the more humane treatment enjoined by the Church towards these.⁷ (7) Care for those visited by great calamities; as, for instance, those suffering from persecution or from an epidemic of the plague.⁸ (8) The provision of work for the unemployed. This need was intensified by the fact that many converts to Christianity could no longer continue to follow their old avocations.⁹ (9) Care of, and provision of hospitality for, brethren on a journey. These would be mainly of two classes: those travelling on behalf of the faith—*i.e.*, missionary teachers and evangelists—and those travelling in search of work.¹⁰ (10) Churches in poverty

¹ Harnack, "Expansion," vol. i., p. 153.

² 1 Tim. v. 18, 19; 1 Cor. ix. 7 *et seq.*

³ Harnack, "Expansion," vol. i., p. 158, note 2.

⁴ 1 Tim. v. 16.

⁵ Harnack, *ibid.*, p. 162.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 165. See quotations from Julian, Aristides, and Apost. Const.

⁷ Harnack, *ibid.*, p. 167. ⁸ Euseb., H. E., vii. 22; ix. 8. ⁹ *Vide infra.*

¹⁰ Rom. xii. 13; 1 Pet. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 2, etc. By Clement of Rome *φιλοξενία* is joined to *πίστις*, cap. x. and xii., and to *ἐνσέβεια*, cap. xi.

or in peril. This was a practical recognition of the truth that, though congregations or local churches might be many, and placed in very different circumstances, the Church itself was one.¹

It is obviously impossible for me to dwell upon all these spheres of philanthropic activity or all these objects of love and care, many of which have their counterparts in our Christian social work to-day. Upon a very few points, however, I would touch briefly. First, I would notice how the more we study the charitable work of the Early Church, the more are we struck by the wisdom, the remarkable skill, and common sense displayed both in the teaching about it and in its organization.² For instance, in the "Didache" the severest penalties are threatened against those who, not being in actual need, shall accept alms; we are also taught that most careful investigation must be made before help is given.

The provision of work for the unemployed, and of hospitality for those seeking work, were matters which very soon claimed the careful attention of the Church. This is evident from the twelfth chapter of the "Didache," which runs thus :

"(1) But let everyone that cometh in the Name of the Lord be received, and then proving him ye shall have complete understanding. (2) If indeed he that cometh is a wayfarer, help him as much as you can, but he shall not remain with you more than two or three days unless there be necessity. (3) But if he willeth to settle among you, and is a craftsman, let him work and [so] eat. (4) But if he have no craft, according to your understanding provide that a Christian shall live with you without being idle. (5) But if he will not act thus he is one who maketh merchandise of Christ; beware of such."

Here we see combined (as they are combined now) two of the most difficult problems which meet the Christian social worker at the present time—those of (1) vagrancy and (2) unemployment. These two problems generally resolve themselves into one—how to help the honest seeker after work, and how to discriminate between him and the idle vagrant, whose object is

¹ From the time of Acts xi. 27 *et seq.*

² Dobschütz, "Christian Life in the Primitive Church," pp. 296, 297. "The finest achievement of the Churches is their organization of Christian charity," etc. (*cf.* Uhlhorn, p. 125).

to live upon the charity of others. We are also well acquainted with those who try to make use of a profession of Christianity¹ (or Churchmanship) as a means of enlisting the sympathy of those who are at once credulous and tender-hearted. The above is by no means the only reference to the subject in early Christian literature; for instance, in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies we read: "For those able to work, provide work; to those incapable of work, be charitable." Occasionally in those days the problem was complicated, because converts felt compelled to give up avocations which they could not conscientiously continue.² For such people the Church felt bound to provide either different work, or at least to provide the necessities of life. The care of "brethren on a journey" was from the first, and long continued to be, a very important part of the Church's philanthropic work. A survival of it was found in the *hospitia*,³ which, either as a part of the monasteries or as separate buildings at intervals along the great high roads, formed resting-places for wayfarers.

Few problems are of greater complexity and need more careful handling than that of "the right to work." I cannot enter upon it here further than to say that all Christian workers should realize it to be a part of their duty, whenever possible, to find work for the honest seeker after work. Owing to the much greater complexity of modern industry, and to cycles of good and bad trade (and corresponding cycles of unemployment), the problem is on a far larger scale, and one of much greater difficulty to us than it was to the early Christians. Still their example, the earnestness with which they pursued this object, and the care they expended upon it, may be a most useful inspiration to ourselves.⁴ Among the various ways of giving help this is generally by far the most permanent and efficacious, and the one most likely to have the best effects upon the moral character of the recipient.

¹ This practice is as old as the "Didache," xii. 5: *χριστέμπορός ἐστι.*

² Cyprian, Ep. ii.

³ The *ξενοδοχεία.*

⁴ Harnack, "Expansion," vol. i., p. 176: "The Church formed a guild of workers. . . . The Churches were also Labour Unions. . . . Their attractive power was consequently intensified."

It is certainly a very great pity that those who have been responsible for the government of this country during the last six years have made no really serious attempt to deal with the crying evil of vagrancy. In 1906 a full and admirable Report,¹ expressing the unanimous opinion of a body of Commissioners thoroughly qualified to deal with the subject, and which embodied excellent recommendations, was presented to Parliament. Then the Poor Law Report of 1909² revealed not only the extreme diversity of treatment adopted by various Poor Law authorities in their dealing with tramps, vagrants, and wayfarers, but it showed how thoroughly incapable, if not how inhuman, some of these authorities were in the way they behaved to those who sought admission to the casual ward. In spite of both these Reports, no new legislation has even been attempted;³ and still to-day the idle vagrant and the honest seeker after work are often alike relegated to the tramp ward of the workhouse. Probably there is no matter connected with the help of the poor which more urgently calls for a wiser treatment than this.

Attention is frequently called in early writings to the effect upon those outside the Church of witnessing the care which the Christians bestowed upon those needing help; for instance, upon the sick, and upon those visited by some calamity⁴ beyond their own control. Eusebius notices this in a description he gives of the conduct of the Christians during a plague which occurred in the reign of Maxentius Daza⁵: "The Christians were the only people who amid such terrible evils showed their fellow-feeling and humanity by their actions. Day by day some would be active in attending to the dead and burying them, for there were numbers of these to whom no one else paid any attention; others gathered into one place all who were afflicted by hunger throughout the whole city, and gave food to them all. When this became known people glorified the Christians' God, and,

¹ Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, vol. i. [Cd. 2852].

² See Minority Report, part ii., cap. i., E.; also cap. v., A., iv. e.

³ With the single exception of "the Labour Exchange," an indirect method.

⁴ Harnack quotes Heb. x. 32 *et seq.*

⁵ Harnack, "Expansion," i. 173.

convinced by the very facts, they confessed that the Christians alone were truly pious and religious.”¹ Undoubtedly there were times when more converts were won over to Christianity by witnessing conduct of this kind than were won by appeals directly addressed to the intellect through preaching and teaching.

This experience has counterparts in two directions at the present time : first, every parish priest with experience could point to instances in which the careless, even the godless, have been actually converted through deeds of self-sacrificing kindness done to them or to their friends in times of sickness, misfortune, or bereavement ; secondly, by means of the work being done by the Medical Missions, now connected with all our great Foreign Missionary Societies, the way is often paved for an entrance for the heathen into the Church. A man or woman cannot be for weeks in a Christian hospital without in some degree coming under the influence of Christianity.

A study of the philanthropic work of the Early Church raises another question which is much debated at the present time—namely, whether religion and what usually comes under the comprehensive name of “relief” should be connected, and if so, what should be the nature of this connection. To-day the trend of opinion is towards their being separated as far as possible. We are told that clergymen and district visitors are not efficient administrators of charity ; and also, that it is not wise for those whose work should be mainly spiritual, and who seek to obtain a spiritual influence, to run the risk of lessening this by mixing the spiritual with the material in their work. We are further assured that where the clergy or Church-workers give relief, people are bribed to attend a place of worship, or at least are induced to make a profession of religion from impure motives. But to divorce religion from charity is the very opposite of the practice of the Early Church. Indeed, it is not too much to say that by the early Christians the power (even the existence) of the spiritual was expressed by their use of the material. Indeed, as

¹ Euseb., H. E., ix. 8.

far as we can judge, those who continued to be responsible for the Church's system of charitable relief during the age with which we are dealing must have had in large measure the three-fold qualification of the seven deacons, the men first chosen to discharge this office. They must have been men of unblameable reputation,¹ so little is recorded against them; they must have been men "full of Spirit,"² or they would never have persevered among the trials to which they were subjected; they must also have been men possessed with a large measure of common sense and skill.³ Some of these men may not have been able to formulate their theology with the accuracy, or in the technical terms, of the Greek Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, but they evidently did their utmost to see that the responsibilities of the various relationships of life were rightly discharged, and that the possessions and opportunities of life were wisely used, Christianity has been defined as the highest form of common sense perfectly sanctified. This description is certainly applicable to Christ's treatment of men. It seems to be not inapplicable to the conduct of the early Christians towards the poor and those in need of help of various kinds.

That certain people with a spiritual avocation give charity unwisely is no valid argument against the connection of charity with religion. Christianity should actually help us to perform every kind of action more wisely. The true remedy is not divorce, but greater efficiency; a larger measure of the "Spirit of wisdom and understanding"; a greater knowledge of human nature, a deeper insight into its processes, also into its temptations and its weaknesses.⁴

Those who distributed charity in the Early Church had, generally speaking, one immense advantage over those engaged in the same work to-day, especially in large poor town parishes. Certainly in the second and third centuries the proportion of merely *nominal* Christians would be far less than is the case

¹ ἄνδρας . . . μαρτυρουμένους.

² πλήρεις Πνεύματος.

³ πλήρεις . . . σοφίας.

⁴ I need not at the present time insist upon the value of some knowledge of at least elementary psychology to the Christian worker.

with us. Also the officials and Church-workers would know the members of the Christian community far more intimately than the average Christian worker at the present time is able to know these.¹ In those days when the numbers of the Christians were comparatively small, the deacons would know, and would be able to explain to the Bishop, both the circumstances and the character of those needing charity far more accurately than the average Christian worker could explain these to-day. The investigation in those days was probably far more thorough than it often is at the present time. It is generally owing either to their inability or their failure to make this that Christian workers are censured for foolish, indeed, sometimes for actually harmful, giving. Investigation is not only a far more difficult task than the average worker imagines, but it demands far more time and labour than the average worker is prepared to bestow upon it.

One question which we should at least attempt to answer is, What was probably the extent of poverty in the age of which we are speaking? Outside Rome, Uhlhorn believes that it was not great, and he gives reasons for this opinion. After stating these, he adds: "All this considered, we may well declare that in the earlier ages of the Church there was no pauperism of the masses except in Rome. . . . Independently of great calamities and times of famine, distress was confined to cases of individual poverty. . . . The duty of the Church was thereby essentially facilitated. In the presence of a poverty thus confined to individual cases, its almsgiving could also be of a strongly individual character."²

But even allowing for the comparative ease of its task, the charitable work of the Early Church demands our admiration; and undoubtedly, as I have already shown, the excellency with which it was performed was no unimportant factor in the victory

¹ In the next age we shall see how largely institutional methods superseded personal dealing. This was probably inevitable when the number of applicants for charity very greatly increased.

² Uhlhorn, pp. 104, 105. Eusebius states that 1,500 widows and indigent persons were supported by the Church in Rome (Euseb., H. E., vi. 43). The cost may have been anything between £5,000 and £10,000.

of Christianity over heathenism.¹ We must admire the motives from which the work was done, and the methods according to which it was pursued, for both were inspired by the strongest Christian convictions. The care of the poor was no mere appendage to the work of the Church ; it was an essential part of that work, and it was carried out with a skill and a thoroughness which it should be our endeavour to imitate.

¹ "It was as a charitable organization that the Christian Church carried to a victorious issue its mighty contest with the Roman Empire, the heathen religions, and its own sects" (Dobschütz, "Christian Life in the Primitive Church," p. 378).

III.

FROM CONSTANTINE THE GREAT TO CHARLEMAGNE.

IN the last chapter I gave a brief account of the charitable work of the Church during the period which extends from the close of the New Testament to the so-called "Conversion" of the empire under Constantine the Great. That event—one of far-reaching consequences for good and evil—marked the beginning of a new era in the life of the Church: one during which if her influence, or rather, perhaps, her power, became very much greater, her temptations became greater in like proportion. Up to this time, speaking generally, the line of demarcation between the Church and "the world" could be clearly drawn; henceforward that was no longer possible. While the Church now entered much more into the world, the world still more surely penetrated the life of the Church.¹ It is, of course, impossible to understand either the work or the difficulties of the Church during this new era without at least some background of historical knowledge, some conception of the political conditions amid which her life was lived. I have not space here to sketch those conditions even in the barest outline; but those who would understand, or would try to form an estimate of, the way in which the Church endeavoured to discharge her duty to the poor during this period must make some study of its general history. This epoch of the Church's history is specially important, not only because within it were formulated those great doctrines which are embodied in the

¹ Hobhouse's Bampton Lectures, "The Church and the World," p. 111 *et seq.*: "The Church . . . became fashionable and worldly, and her spiritual standard was inevitably lowered. The evidence for this statement is bewildering in its abundance and variety."

Nicene Creed, but because there were also then established certain principles and ideals of conduct which persisted at least until the eve of the Reformation.¹ It is a little difficult to divide this long stretch of history into natural or even convenient sections. For our present purpose the first five hundred years may be divided into the following three parts: First, from the conversion of Constantine to the fall of the Western Empire in A.D. 476; secondly, from that time to the death of Gregory the Great in A.D. 604; and, thirdly, from then to the coronation of Charlemagne in A.D. 800. We must, of course, continue to confine our attention strictly to the special subject we have in view, and in regard to that only so far as the Western Empire, or Western Europe, is concerned.

From an economic point of view, the century and a half between the conversion of Constantine and the fall of the Western Empire was one of constantly increasing stress, and this stress became even more acute during the second of the three periods which we have just named.² Until the conversion of the Empire, it must have been almost always possible for the Church to deal individually and adequately with the needs of those among her members who required material assistance. Up to this time the number of Christians was comparatively small,³ and certainly, considering her resources, the liberality of the Church was great. Also during this period, except in Rome itself, poverty was neither extreme nor widespread. Now each one of these conditions was to be entirely reversed. The number at least of nominal Christians grew rapidly; and, partly owing to the economic stress, and partly because merely nominal Christians are never so liberal as real Christians, the resources of the Church could not keep pace with the growing demands which were made upon them. In the aggregate, no

¹ On this point, see the following chapter.

² See Uhlhorn's "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," book iii., chap. i., "A Perishing World," p. 219 *et seq.*

³ Uhlhorn, p. 137: "The Churches were still small and like a family; each Christian knew all others . . . even Cyprian, in a town like Carthage, knew all the members of the Church."

doubt, the wealth of the Church increased enormously, and great estates were from time to time bequeathed to her; also, to a great extent, she was freed from the burdens of an excessive taxation; but even these advantages were more than counteracted by the terrible conditions amidst which her work had to be done.¹

Thus the charitable work of the Church during this age was infinitely more difficult than in the preceding age. Uhlhorn has shown how the task which lay before the Church was of a twofold nature. She had "to stand with her aid and her comforts at the deathbed of the old world"; at the same time "she had to stand with her help and her service at the cradle of the new age."² She had to try to assuage "the appalling misery," "the wholesale wretchedness," which marked the passing of the dying Empire; and, contemporaneously with the performance of this task, we see Christian charity so doing its work as undoubtedly to become one of the main educational agencies for the young German nation—one which was helping to win the various barbarian peoples to the Church.

We must not forget that this was the age in which monasticism passed over from the East to the West, and during which it began to flourish in Italy and Western Europe.³ From this time down to the age of the Reformation the monasteries played a very important, and to a great extent a beneficial, part in the charitable work of the Church. Doubtless the system of charity associated with them, or rather administered by them, especially in the later Middle Ages, was the source of many evils; but, on the other hand, the monasteries performed a task which needed to be done, and which, especially during the earlier Middle Ages, no other agency could have performed. No doubt, even in those earlier days, it was not always from the highest motives that men fled from the troubles and oppres-

¹ Uhlhorn, p. 249: "There is not a preacher of the time in whose sermons we do not find an echo of the tremendous distress which surrounds him."

² Uhlhorn, p. 233.

³ "Cambridge Medieval History," vol. i., p. 531 *et seq.*

sions of the outside world into the comparative peace and security to be found within the walls of a monastery. But the monastic life, at any rate in its ideal, was far from being a selfish life. Benedict of Nursia,¹ the true founder of Western monasticism, inculcated the value of work, and by work the monasteries obtained the means for a very extensive system of benevolence. Among the tools of the spiritual art, Benedict reckons feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and burying the dead. According to his rule, the *cellarius* must see to the care of the children, the sick, the strangers, and the poor.² "In times of scarcity, and during the irruptions of the barbarians, it was frequently the monasteries that preserved the miserable remnant of the population from starvation."³

Only those who have studied carefully the history of those times can realize what the conditions were in Western Europe during the fifth and sixth centuries. Taxation had increased to such an amount that people even committed suicide to escape its burdens. Population was rapidly decreasing, and, owing to the constant incursions of Goths, Lombards, Vandals and Huns, not only life, but even such property as remained was utterly insecure. "A few rich . . . lived in luxury, and ate from gold plate on silver tables . . . but beside them were the countless numbers of a proletariat suffering the want of the commonest necessities. In every town there were crowds of beggars ; they filled the high roads, and went from place to place ; they lay by hundreds in the public places, and especially before the churches, naked, hungry, freezing with cold, sick and emaciated, calling on the passers-by for assistance, trying in every way to excite compassion."⁴

By far the most striking personality in those days was

¹ Benedict was born about A.D. 480 ; he was educated at Rome ; lived for some time as a hermit at Subiaco, where later he founded monasteries. He removed to Monte Cassino about A.D. 530, where he is believed to have composed the "Benedictine Rule," and where he died, probably about A.D. 543.

² Uhlhorn, p. 359.

³ Uhlhorn, p. 360. On "The Institution of the Endowed Charity" during this period, see Loch, "Charity and Social Life," p. 218 *et seq.*

⁴ Uhlhorn, p. 243.

Gregory the Great, who seemed to concentrate in himself the best characteristics of both Christianity and the Empire. Few men have lived a fuller or a more many-sided life, and few have realized to such an extent the opportunities which their position offered them for doing the work that needed to be done. Gregory was born in Rome about A.D. 540. He sprang from an ancient senatorial family ; his father is termed " Regionarius," and therefore possibly was an official charged with the secular business of one of the ecclesiastical regions of Rome.¹ He was evidently a rich man, and inhabited a handsome palace on the slope of the Cælian Hill. I cannot stay to describe in detail the world of Gregory's childhood and youth.² Certainly the miserable condition of Italy during that period could hardly be exaggerated. It did not matter what power was in the ascendant, Goth or Greek or Lombard or Vandal, the people suffered from all. One barbarian army after another ravaged and pillaged the country, but the populace seems to have suffered even more from the rapacity of the imperial commanders and their soldiery, who sought to drive the barbarians out, than it did from the barbarians themselves. In addition to the horrors of war, the people experienced those of pestilence and famine. Mr. Dudden thinks that " quite early in life Gregory had begun to develop such qualities as prudence, foresight, capacity for administration, tenacity of purpose, and ability to rise above difficulties apparently overwhelming."³ Soon after he was thirty years of age, we find Gregory in the position of Prefect of the City of Rome.⁴ The position was one of great responsibility, for practically the management of the city was under the Prefect's control. Among other things, he had to see to the supply of grain and the distribution of free food for the people ;⁵ also under his direction and supervision there was a large body of deputies, secretaries, notaries, clerks, and ushers.⁶ At that

¹ Dudden, " Gregory the Great," vol. i., p. 6.

² This is very fully described in Dudden, vol. i., chap. ii.

³ Dudden, vol. i., p. 101.

⁴ Dudden, *ibid.* (who quotes Joh. Diac., " Vita," vol. i., p. 4).

⁵ The *annona civica*.

⁶ " Cambridge Medieval History," vol. i., p. 50.

time Gregory's position must have been one of almost overwhelming anxiety. Inside the city he had to face a soldiery constantly on the verge of mutiny, and a population utterly disorganized, suffering from extreme poverty,¹ and which, in addition, was liable to constant outbreaks of plague. The city was also crowded with refugees, because outside the barbarians were devastating and pillaging the country.²

After filling the post of Prefect with conspicuous success, Gregory's deeply religious nature suggested to him a higher vocation. He became a monk³ and upon the death of his father he devoted nearly all the patrimony he inherited to charitable purposes, keeping but a small share for himself. With this wealth he founded several monasteries, including that of St. Andrew on the Cælian Hill. In A.D. 578 Gregory was ordained "Seventh Deacon" of Rome, being then charged with the superintendence of one of the seven "regions" of the city.⁴ From A.D. 579 to A.D. 586 Gregory was *apocrisiarius* to the Pope—that is, his permanent ambassador at the Court of Byzantium. Then, to his great delight, he was recalled to Rome, and became abbot of St. Andrew's Monastery.⁵ Four years after Gregory's return, in addition to its many other grievous troubles, Rome was visited by a terrible outbreak of the plague. In February of A.D. 590, Pope Pelagius died, whereupon, at once and without hesitation, Gregory was elected in his place; and if ever there was a time, even in the history of the papacy, when it was essential to have a capable administrator, it was when Gregory was admitted to the office. He was, of course, a remarkably many-sided man—a very considerable scholar, a great preacher, and a most capable ecclesiastical ruler. But it is only with Gregory as an administrator in the philanthropic work of the Church that I can deal here. What he accomplished

¹ There seems to have been a famine in A.D. 570, 571.

² The Lombard invasion was in A.D. 571.

³ Probably about A.D. 574.

⁴ Dudden, vol. i., p. 120.

⁵ As to how far Gregory's foundation was affected by the Rules of St. Benedict, see Dudden, vol. i., p. 107 *et seq.*

in this particular sphere of activity is astonishing, especially when we remember that to it Gregory could devote but a small portion of either his time or his energies: for, in addition to his ecclesiastical and patriarchal responsibilities, he was practically responsible for the defence of Rome against the Lombards; indeed, frequently he had to take the leadership in military affairs.¹

The social conditions which Gregory had immediately to face were terrible. The city was then thronged with indigent refugees. In addition to having to feed these, a large part of the regular population were actually famine-stricken; there were hardly any wealthy men left in Rome—in fact, there was little beyond the product of the estates of the Church to which the people could look for help. Gregory's management of these estates seems to have been excellent; had it not been so, the funds at his disposal could not have been what they were.² Gregory's system of administration of charity was as follows:³ Every ecclesiastical district (*regio*) in Rome had its deaconry, or office of alms, which was under the superintendence of a deacon, and the accounts of which were kept by a general administrator. Here the poor, the aged, and the destitute of the several "regions" received food on application.⁴ For the homeless there were the *xenodochia*.⁵ "On the first day of each month he distributed to the poor that part of the Church's revenue which was paid in kind—corn, wine, cheese, vegetables, meat, fish, and oil, were most discreetly doled out by this father of the family of the Lord."⁶ "Every day he sent out, by appointed couriers, cooked provisions to the sick and the infirm throughout the streets and lanes of all the city districts." Mr. Dudden adds to these

¹ Dudden, vol. i., p. 246 *et seq.* As Prefect of the city, Gregory would have been previously associated with the *magister militum*; also he had the *cohortes urbanæ* under his command.

² "Already in the fifth century the Church was the greatest landowner in the Empire" (Uhlhorn, p. 261).

³ Dudden, vol. i., p. 247 *et seq.*

⁴ "The Roman *plebs* had thus become the *pauperes Christi*, and under that title were being fed by *civica annona* and *sportula* as their ancestors had been" (Loch, "Charity and Social Life," p. 213).

⁵ See the next chapter.

⁶ "Prudentissimus paterfamilias Christi Gregorius."

extracts: "So particular was Gregory in seeing that this system of relief was effectively carried out, and so thoroughly did he consider himself responsible for the welfare of his people, that on one occasion, when a poor man was found dead of starvation, Gregory abstained from celebrating Mass for some days, sorrowing as though he was the man's actual murderer."² Towards the end of the ninth century a "Life of Gregory" was written by John the Deacon. To show how carefully charity was administered under Gregory's supervision, I may, from this "Life," quote the following: "There exists to this day, in the most holy archives of the Lateran Palace, a very large paper volume, compiled in Gregory's times, wherein the names of all persons of either sex, of all ages and professions, both at Rome and in the suburbs, in the neighbouring towns and even in the distant cities on the coast, are set down, together with details concerning their family names, their ages, and the payments which they received."³ Gregory was evidently a believer in the value of a very complete *speculum gregis*. It would be well if the clergy to-day generally held the same opinion. In Gregory's case it must have been exceptionally difficult to keep such a list; indeed, it can only have been done through a very perfectly organized system. One charge cannot be made against Gregory—that in his care for the temporal wants of his people, he neglected their spiritual welfare. To deal with this is beside my purpose. It must suffice to say that no man ever laid greater stress upon the teaching office of the pastor, and no man ever carried out this part of his work more assiduously. The preaching alone, which Gregory seems to have done, would have severely taxed the energies of an ordinary man.¹

I do not lay stress upon Gregory's *methods* of administering charity. Certainly I do not wish my readers to infer that those

¹ Dudden, vol. i., p. 249.

² Joh. Diac., "Vita," Dudden, vol. i., p. 249. Such a list was known as a *matricula*, which is thus defined: "Matricula dicebatur canon seu liber in quo descripti erant qui ecclesiæ sumptibus alebantur."

³ Certainly Gregory could not be accused of separating the "spiritual work" and "social work" of the Church.

methods (apart from their qualities of thoroughness and conscientiousness) would be the best and most suitable in the conditions of the present. What I would urge is, that Gregory represents to us a very high level of a conscientious discharge of a primary Christian responsibility. He shows what a really earnest Christian (who was also a great Churchman) considered to be his duty towards the poor. Undoubtedly the conduct of men like Gregory made a wonderful appeal both to the old nations and to the new. It showed them that the discharge of human relationships (in the best sense of the word "human") was an essential part of Christian life and conduct. While Gregory's motives were intensely philanthropic, at the same time they were based on a deep conviction of Christian truth, and that belief in this truth involved a certain definite line of Christian conduct. Gregory's work among the poor was a natural issue of his belief in the binding authority of Christ's command, "Give ye them to eat," and of his acceptance of Christ's own test, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

For another reason Gregory's work is not only of great interest, but of still greater importance. To him, more than to anyone else, was due the commanding position and influence of the papacy during the Middle Ages. Gregory neither coveted nor seized the position of supremacy which he occupied.¹ It fell to him because he was the only man at the time who was qualified to occupy it. Gregory (who had been an imperial official) took over, and with him the Church took over, many of the duties and responsibilities, and also not a few of the ideas, of the Empire;² and those duties and ideas did not cease to be connected with the papacy when Gregory passed away. They were originally attached to the man; they became attached to the office. When Gregory gave food to the starving citizens of Rome, he was, as I have already showed (if from a very different

¹ Dudden, vol. i., p. 225, where are also given the authorities for this statement.

² Fairbairn, "Catholicism, Roman and Anglican," p. 190 *et seq.*

motive), only doing what the Emperors had done when they distributed the *annona civica* to the *plebs*; also the gifts obtainable at the deaconries were, in fact, a continuation of the *sportula*, which for centuries had been distributed, first by rich patrons to their clients, and then by the officials of the Emperors.

With the death of Gregory, in A.D. 604, we enter the Middle Ages. From this point to the crowning of Charlemagne, in A.D. 800, is a period of all but two hundred years. It was a rough and turbulent period, and, more than most ages, it was one of rapid transition. The difficulty in forming a clear conception of this period arises from that of keeping in view at once the various movements which were at work in so many lands—*e.g.*, in Italy, in Gaul, in Germany, and in Great Britain.¹ In Italy it witnessed the struggle between the Lombards and the relics of the Empire, a struggle into which, later, the Franks entered as allies of the Pope,² and with far-reaching consequences for the future. In Gaul and Western Germany we see the amalgamation between the old civilization and the new Teutonic nations rapidly taking place. In England there was a constant struggle between Christianity and heathenism; while, on the borders of the Empire, the work of Christian Missionaries was being actively pursued. This period also covered the rise of Mohammedanism and the Saracenic wars and conquests in Europe.

In connection with our present subject, the period is one of considerable interest, though, from the different and constantly changing conditions existing in various parts of Western Europe, it is difficult in a brief compass to describe the way in which the Church during this age dealt with the problem of the poor. Very considerable changes were taking place in the structure of

¹ A brief but clear outline of movements and events during this period will be found in the late Dean Church's "The Beginning of the Middle Ages." The subject of the relief of the poor during this age is treated in Ratzinger's "Geschichte der Kirchlichen Armenpflege," part ii. (this book has not been translated into English). Also much may be learnt from Professor Loch's "Charity and Social Life."

² See Church, p. 92.

society ; for instance, personal slavery was disappearing under a system of organized social dependence.¹ Tribal custom, which was due to the Teutonic races, was in Western Europe taking the place of the social system which had existed under the Empire. Then, issuing from tribal custom, we find the first traces of the "manor" (which was in theory a self-supporting social unit)² and the beginnings of feudalism (which arose out of a movement for the protection and maintenance of the settled labourers or *coloni*).³ Both the manorial system and feudalism arose out of the division of the Roman Empire among the great proprietors. The *coloni*, who were originally the small cultivators, became, largely on account of their poverty, serfs, holding their land subject to the payment of certain dues. On the other hand, the great proprietors, upon whose estates these worked, became, at any rate to a certain extent, responsible for their maintenance.

During this period, also, we see a development of the parish (as we understand the term) out of the diocese, which was, of course, originally the parish of the bishop.⁴ In connection with this particular development arise the much-debated questions of the origin and allocation of tithe—questions which are of very practical interest at the present time.⁵ Again, during these two centuries we see a further growth of the monastic system, which, as it grew, provided more and more institutional relief.

Thus in this age we see at least traces of the three systems of relief of the poor, which, if in a very different form, are still in existence. Under the manorial system there is a relief, or at least a responsibility for relief, which is either unconnected or very indirectly connected with the Church ; from the parochial tithe and other Church funds we have what is termed to-day "home aliment" ; while in the monastic system we have at least a measure of "institutional" relief. Doubtless then, as to-day, there was frequently an overlapping in the case of the

¹ See Loch, chap. xxi.

² *Ibid.*, p. 267.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁴ Hatch, "The Growth of Church Institutions," pp. 81, 82 ; Ratzinger, p. 199.

⁵ Hatch, p. 101 *et seq.*

first two of these three systems, or probably, as at the present time, the relief which was imposed by law had frequently to be supplemented by relief from the funds of the Church.

As time went on we find the monasteries encroaching more and more upon the parish, and especially upon the funds of the parish. In a variety of ways they became possessors of a large share of the parochial tithes which were originally designed, among other purposes, for the relief of the poor.¹ At the dissolution of the monasteries this part of their wealth, with the rest of their possessions, fell into the hands of powerful laymen, and thus property originally bequeathed to the poor was finally alienated from them.

The care of the poor in this, as in other ages, depended to a great extent upon the general level of the spirituality of the Church's life, and most frequently upon the reality of the Christianity of those in high places of authority in the Church. In England these two centuries form, on the whole, a bright epoch in Church history ; in France the opposite seems to have been the case. Certainly under the Merovingian Dynasty the Church appears to have sunk to an extremely low ebb of spirituality.² Where this takes place we frequently find that the love of money, or the desire to become rich, also exists ; consequently we are not surprised to find that very often property, which was left for the relief of the poor, was appropriated to the enrichment of the clergy.

With the accession of Charlemagne a great change took place in the wide kingdom over which he ruled, and to which he added by many conquests.³ He was at once a great soldier, a great statesman, and a great social and ecclesiastical reformer. Rarely, if ever, have the affairs of Church and State been so interwoven as they were under him. Charlemagne was especially a great administrator ; he looked for diligence and justice in administration from all those occupying posts of responsibility,

¹ " By Acts of Richard II. and Henry IV. it was enacted that if parochial tithes were appropriated to a monastery, a portion of them should be assigned to the poor of the parish " (Loch, p. 272).

² Ratzinger, p. 189 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

whether they were dukes governing provinces, bishops overseeing dioceses, or rulers of various cities. In his "capitularies" we have a great body of evidence of the oversight which he exercised upon matters of every description, both civil and ecclesiastical.¹ Many of these injunctions have reference to the use of the Church's property and to the care of the poor. Neither bishops, nor clergy, nor powerful laymen, were to rob the poor of their just share of the possessions of the Church; and these possessions were to be free from burdens of State taxation. In the case of rich churches, such as cathedral foundations, a fourth part of their entire possessions was to be devoted to the relief of the poor; in the case of poorer churches a fourth part of the tithe only was to be so expended.² Both bishops and clergy were admonished to seek out the poor in their own houses, to discover the causes of poverty, and to relieve the same.³ A roll of poor people was to be kept. Again, both bishops and clergy were to share their table with the poor. A wide interpretation was given to the New Testament command that the householder must care for his family, which was held to include all who were in any way attached or bound to the estate.⁴ For poor people who had no such connection, and who were unable to provide for themselves, the Church must provide; also the education of orphans without protectors and of foundlings fell to her. For the wandering poor the bishops and clergy, as holders of the Church's "property for the poor," must specially be held responsible; the work-shy and the vagabond, who could but would not work, must not be maintained, but must be compelled to work.⁵

¹ Church, "The Beginning of the Middle Ages," p. 125 *et seq.*

² Ratzinger, p. 201.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴ From the "Capitulare de Villis Imperiabilis": "Ut familia nostra bene conservata sit, et a nemine in paupertatem missa." Ratzinger remarks upon c. 45: "Zu dieser *familia* zählten auch die Handwerker aller Art."

⁵ Ratzinger, p. 208.

IV.

THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES.

1. *The Conditions.*

THE great Empire founded by Charlemagne did not long outlive him. After the death of his son, Louis the Pious, in A.D. 840, it rapidly fell to pieces ; and by the Treaty of Verdun, in A.D. 843, was made that division of Western Europe which in essence still exists to-day.¹ With the fall of the Empire of Charlemagne, there also came to an end what we may term the unity of the Church's social work ; in fact, since the days of Charlemagne, the Church as a whole has issued no binding decrees upon the relief of the poor.² From that time onwards we cannot speak of this part of the Church's task in general terms. Henceforward, to a certain extent, the way in which she did her charitable work varied in different countries. Yet amid these differences there were in each age certain common features, at any rate down to the time of the Reformation. These common features were due to certain prevailing ideas which permeated the doctrinal and social teaching of the whole Western Church in each particular period.

These facts must govern the treatment of our subject in the present chapter, in which I propose first, to deal very briefly with the general condition of the ninth and tenth centuries ; and secondly, to try to explain the ideas of charity which then inspired and ruled the method of dispensing it.

Speaking generally, the ninth and tenth centuries are among the very darkest periods of the Church's history. This is

¹ Church, "Middle Ages," p. 148 *et seq.* and p. 156 *et seq.*

² Ratzinger, "Geschichte der Kirchlichen Armenpflege," p. 236.

especially true of France and Italy, and, if to a somewhat less extent, it is also true of Germany ; it is certainly less true of England.¹ During this period were repeated, in many ways, the experiences which followed the break-up of the Western Empire some 300 years before. In both ages we see authority passing out of the hands of a central government into the hands of a multitude of small chieftains, whose time was chiefly spent in quarrelling with each other, and one of whose objects seems to have been to oppress those over whom they ruled. Feudalism² grew rapidly in the State, and something extremely like it flourished in the Church ; for there were feudal bishops as well as feudal barons, and the conduct of the bishops seems frequently to have been even worse than that of the barons.³ The care of the poor was forgotten ; cleric and noble vied with one another in sucking the life-blood from their wretched dependents.⁴ Yet even in this age there were lights in the darkness. "Side by side with the proud and cruel warrior who, without mercy, devastated the fields of the unhappy peasants, and heartlessly squeezed the last penny from his tenants, stood here a monk, there a priest, who burned with indignation and threatened with an everlasting curse when his prayers for pity were of no avail. If there were many bishops who used the great possessions of the Church only to gratify their own lusts, there were still many men who pitied the poor, espoused their cause, and bestowed all they had upon their relief."⁵

In a speech to the bishops assembled at a council near Soissons in A.D. 909, the archbishop of Rheims drew a terribly dark picture of the conditions then existing in France : "All respect for Divine and human law has vanished . . . every man does as he will ; the strong oppress the weak ; men have become like the fishes in the sea which devour each other. . . . Lawlessness chokes every kind of growth. . . . Everywhere we see oppression of the poor and robbery of the Church. Con-

¹ We must remember the work of Alfred, also of Dunstan.

² Upon the effects of feudalism see Ratzinger, p. 236 *et seq.*

³ Milman, "Latin Christianity," vol. iii., p. 176 *et seq.*

⁴ Ratzinger, p. 237.

⁵ *Ibid.*

sequently the tears of the widows and the sobs of the orphans constantly rise up to heaven.”¹ For this state of things the archbishop told the assembled bishops that they were themselves largely to blame.

In Germany, during this period, the same conditions to some extent prevailed, though, as a whole, the Church there never sank to so low a level as it did in France. While it suffered from the evils of feudalism, it still retained the influences bequeathed to it by men like Boniface and Alcuin. The bishops, many of whom had been trained in the schools founded by these great leaders, strove to maintain the regulations which Charlemagne had established for the protection and relief of the poor.²

At a council held at Maintz in A.D. 847 it was decreed that the tithe, which every Christian should pay to his parish church, must be divided into four parts, of which one part must be devoted to the relief of the poor. To the bishop was committed the task of the oversight of the administration of relief throughout his diocese; upon him was the responsibility of a firm control laid. Laymen who were guilty of usurpation of the Church's property were to be excommunicated. Also the king was petitioned to interpose against the oppression of poor free-men, and to defend the churches and their possessions as his own property. At a parliament held at Maintz in A.D. 851 these decrees of the council were promulgated as laws of the realm.³

During this period Germany had to face serious troubles upon her borders; the Magyars on the one side, and the Northmen on another side, not only devastated the country, but also burnt the churches and destroyed the monasteries.⁴

In the tenth century, under the firm rule of the Saxon Kings, the true founders of the German Empire,⁵ we find a greatly

¹ Ratzinger, pp. 241, 242.

² “Es war ein hohes Glück für Deutschland, dass in seinem Episcopate der Geist eines Bonifatius, eines Alcuin noch lange fortwirkte” (Ratzinger, p. 250).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁴ Church, “Middle Ages,” p. 184.

⁵ Church, *ibid.*, p. 195 *et seq.* “Mit den sächsischen Kaisern beginnt die Blüthezeit der deutschen Kirche” (Ratzinger, p. 252).

improved condition of the Church. At this time many of the bishops were men not only of great influence in affairs of State, but also men of real piety, who cared to the utmost of their ability for the poor, saw to their needs, and frequently fed them at their table and maintained them in their own houses. What the bishops did in the large towns they directed the clergy to do in their various parishes. From their income, derived from tithes and oblations, they must support the poor and those unable to work; they must supply the needs of widows and orphans; they must also provide food and shelter for wayfarers. Though the proportion of the income of the Church to be devoted to the poor is not stated, it was probably that ordered by Charlemagne.¹ A survey of this period gives the impression that the bestowal of charity was becoming more and more a matter of personal feeling—indeed, of personal piety—and that, consequently, it was in practice less and less governed by any general regulations.² This was almost inevitable, as we shall find when we come to consider the ideas upon which the bestowal of charity in this age—in fact, throughout the Middle Ages—was based.

In order to understand how the poor were relieved in England during this same period we must take a brief retrospect. One of the well-known questions which Augustine addressed to Gregory the Great had reference to the distribution of the Church's revenues.³ Gregory's reply was that the best scheme for distribution is that recommended by the Roman See—a fourfold partition between the bishop, the clergy, the poor, and the repair of the church.⁴ There is not sufficient evidence to show how far this method of distribution was carried out in practice in England; but there is evidence to show that certain differences did exist between the customs of Rome and

¹ Ratzinger, p. 253.

² Uhlhorn, "Die Christliche Liebesthätigkeit, im Mittelalter," p. 65; "Es gehört zu den Eigentümlichkeiten des Mittelalters, dass eine geordnete Armenpflege überhaupt nicht kennt."

³ Bright, "Early English Church History," p. 56.

⁴ Greg. M. Epp., xii. 31.

those of the old British Church in reference to the relief of the poor. This was one among several matters upon which Archbishop Theodore had to legislate. He appears to have removed the distribution from the bishops to the parochial clergy¹—in fact, to have arranged relief in England (as it was in France) upon the parochial system.² Later we find that in England practically the principles of Charlemagne were more or less closely followed. The so-called *excerptiones* of Archbishop Egbert are clearly a compilation from French capitularies and from the decrees of French Councils.³ The English system probably owed much to scholars like Alcuin (the friend and adviser of Charlemagne), who were perfectly familiar with Continental methods. What seems quite clear is that in the ninth and tenth centuries (with one important exception) the system of poor relief associated with the name of Charlemagne was that which was generally in force in our own country. The exception to which I refer is that in England a *third*, and not, as in France, a fourth, of the tithe was devoted to the relief of the poor.⁴ In the *Liber legum Ecclesiasticarum* there is an instruction to the priest—namely, that in his leisure-time he shall do some useful work, in order that from the proceeds of this he may be able to help the needy.

In England, as in France, the duty of relieving the poor was not confined to the clergy. By the *Constitutio* of King Athelstan the nobles are enjoined to care for the poor, and especially shall each of these make himself responsible for the maintenance of one poor person, and shall also annually redeem one slave. If they failed to perform these duties they shall pay a fine, which shall be devoted to relief.⁵

In England there existed far into the Middle Ages a very considerable amount of slavery, or, at any rate, conditions which

¹ Ratzinger, p. 174.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁴ "Canones Ælfrici," 960, c. 24: "Sancti patres constituerunt ut homines tradant decimas suas ecclesiæ Dei et sacerdos veniat et distribuât in tres partes: unam ad reparationem ecclesiæ, secundam egenis, tertiam autem Dei ministris, qui ecclesiæ illius curam gerunt." See Additional Note.

⁵ Ratzinger, p. 267 (where the passage from the *Constitutio regis Æthelstani* is given at length).

can hardly be distinguished from slavery. Lingard considers that prior to the Norman Conquest "not less than two-thirds of the population existed in a state of slavery . . . the most numerous of these lived on the land of their lord . . . and their respective services were allotted according to the will of their proprietor. . . . Their persons, families, and goods were at his disposal . . . either by gift or sale."¹ For these the householder was held responsible. In the case of men without an owner, and who were unable to provide for themselves, it was enacted by the laws of King Athelstan that "he must reside with some householder, without whose surety he would not be regarded as a member of the community nor be entitled to its protection."²

The Church in England, as on the Continent, had during this age its periods of light and darkness,³ of spiritual influence and of the absence of this. At one time it so did its work as to deserve respect; at another time it sunk into a condition of worldliness. But, at any rate after the reformation of Dunstan, it probably never sank so low as it did elsewhere. Ratzinger asserts that alone did the English Church maintain throughout the Middle Ages the duty of relieving the poor, and it alone held not only in theory, but in practice, that a portion of its wealth should be devoted to this purpose. The possessions of the Church in England during the Middle Ages, including the tithes, never became the prey of a rapacious nobility.⁴

2. *The Doctrine of Charity.*

We must now turn to a subject which demands very careful consideration—namely, What were the principles, ideas, or beliefs which underlay and which inspired the charitable work of the period we have been considering, and which, at any rate

¹ Lingard, "History of England," vol. i., pp. 347, 353.

² Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 13.

³ "Die Englische Kirche erlebte ihre Blüthezeit in der zweiten Hälfte der 9 Jahrhunderts. . . . Schrecklich ist die Schilderung, welche König Edgar von der Verwilderung des Clerus entwirft" (Ratzinger, p. 268).

⁴ P. 269.

to some extent, persisted until the Reformation? That an immense change had taken place in the principles which governed the charitable work of the Church is clear to every careful student of the subject. This change is to-day attributed to the influence of "syncretism,"¹ by which is meant the absorption into Christianity of elements more or less alien to its original principles or conduct. The principal sources of this influence, at any rate so far as the charitable work of the Church is concerned, were two: first, that of Judaism, which was the earlier influence; secondly, that of ideas and practices generally current in the Græco-Roman world. These ideas and practices the converts from the old religions (who were often very imperfect converts) brought over with them into the Church's system.

When we speak of the influence of Judaism we must not think only of the teaching of the Old Testament; we must be careful to include Jewish ideas current at the time of Christ² and during the age preceding this; also, we must remember the ideas at work among the Jews in the period following that of the New Testament. I must not dwell upon the teaching of the Old Testament on the relief of the poor. Even a brief outline of this would require a chapter to itself. But I must insist upon the fact that this side of Jewish life was very strongly developed in later Judaism; actually it has continued to be a marked feature of Judaism down to the present time.³ We can trace this development in the later books of the Old Testament, and especially in the Apocrypha. The word *ελεημοσύνη* in the Greek version of the Old Testament, which originally was used of the practice of works of mercy, had by the time that the books of Sirach and Tobit were written come to be a quite specific description of deeds of compassion to the

¹ On this subject see the Epilogue to Book II. of Harnack's "Mission and Expansion of Christianity," Eng. Trans., vol. i., p. 312 *et seq.*

² In a recent lecture Professor Moffatt states that what he terms "attention to the hinterland of rabbinic tradition" probably forms the most fruitful field for further elucidation of the New Testament at the present time.

³ *E.g.*, the Jewish Board of Guardians in London.

poor.¹ By the second or third century B.C. almsgiving had come to be an acknowledged observance of the religious life, and stood in the same category with prayer and fasting.² It is regarded as a means of making atonement for sin,³ and the merit of it as an unfailing possession. In the Talmud the same teaching is even more accentuated; "righteousness" becomes a recognized name for almsgiving, and by almsgiving a man may be accounted righteous in the sight of God. From all this it will be seen that the tendency is to think especially of the effect of almsgiving upon the *giver* of the alms; the effect upon the recipient is secondary. This tendency proceeded so far as to lead the Jews to speak of the poor as the means of the rich man's salvation. The words of our Lord in St. Matt. vi. 2-4, while they may be said to accept the current value of almsgiving as a religious practice or duty, give no countenance to the Jewish doctrine that it effects any remission of sins, that in the ordinary acceptation of the word it has any "propitiatory" power. What our Lord does insist upon is purity of motive, indifference to human praise, and the need of self-forgetfulness. This last requisite is entirely inimical to the idea of propitiation, which is essentially and to a high degree "self-regarding." How strongly and how early the Jewish idea of the propitiatory value of almsgiving entered the Church may be seen from these

¹ See article on "Almsgiving," in Hastings' "Bib. Dict." (by Professor Stanton), vol. i., pp. 68 *et seq.*; also Hatch's "Essays in Biblical Greek," p. 49 *et seq.*—*i.e.*, on δικαιοσύνη and ἐλεημοσύνη). A curiously far-fetched interpretation is that of Ps. xvii. 15, where the Rabbis interpreted אֲנִי בִצְדָק אֶהְיֶה כְּנִי by "I shall behold Thy face by almsgiving."

² Tobit xii. 8: ἀγαθὸν προσευχὴ μετὰ νηστείας καὶ ἐλεημοσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης.

³ Sirach iii. 30:

"Water will quench a flaming fire,
And almsgiving will make atonement for sin"

(ἐλεημοσύνη ἐξιλάσεται ἁμαρτίας. The Hebrew here has צִדְקָה.)

Also Sirach xxix. 9-11:

"Help a poor man for the commandment's sake;

Bestow thy treasure according to the commandments of the Most High;
And it shall profit thee more than gold."

Also Tobit xii. 9: "Alms doth deliver from death, and it shall purge away all sin."

two sayings: "If there were no poor the greater part of your sins would not be removed";¹ and "By prayer we seek to propitiate God, by fasting we extinguish the lusts of the flesh; by alms we redeem our sins."² In contrast to the Jewish self-regarding doctrine which penetrated (and to a large extent vitiated) the mediæval theory of charity we may contrast the wisdom of the teaching of the early Church where the words "Give to him that asketh thee" are followed by "Woe to him that taketh; for if, indeed, anyone having need taketh he shall be guiltless, but he that hath not need shall give account . . . and being in distress shall be examined concerning the things that he did."³

When we speak of the influence of the Græco-Roman world upon Christian charity after the conversion of the Empire and during the early Middle Ages, we must be careful to define our meaning, for in those days as in these the practice of the community usually fell far below, and so was widely different from, the principles of its clearest thinkers. If we go to teachers like Aristotle among the Greeks, or to Cicero, Seneca, or Epictetus among the Romans, we shall find excellent and extremely wise principles enunciated upon a man's treatment of his poorer neighbours. We shall find many a valuable axiom which would come under the head not only of justice, but of charity, or what the Latin would term *de beneficiis*.⁴ But this would be in the realms of ideal ethics and philosophy. When, however, we come to the sphere of actual practice we find something very different. We find in Rome and other great cities an immense, and to a great extent an indiscriminate, and therefore unwise, distribution of free food,⁵ just as there were free amusements. When, as in the time of Gregory the Great, the Church had become possessed of very considerable means, when, also, the

¹ "St. Chrysostom," Homily xv.

² "Leo the Great," Sermon xv. 4.

³ "The Teaching of the Twelve," cap. i. 5.

⁴ On this subject much which will be found useful may be learnt from Professor Loch's "Charity and Social Life," especially chaps. iv., ix., xii., and xv.

⁵ E.g., The *annona civica*.

number of professing Christians had enormously increased, and the poverty of the vast majority of the population had become far more acute, can it be wondered that the Church took over a great part of this free distribution of food from the State? Christianity is the religion of love. Could the Church see these people starve? Doubtless where there were men with the organizing power of Gregory the Great, efforts would be made to distribute charity as judiciously as was possible under the circumstances; but we can well understand that frequently this distribution would be far from wise. Two effects inevitably supervened: First, the Church felt a responsibility towards the poor; secondly, the poor learnt to look to the Church for support; and so, ultimately, the care of the poorer classes became the charge of the Church. By its teaching the Church strengthened the feeling of pity for those in need. But the work at its best was simply one of palliation; the Church relieved poverty, but made no attempt to abolish it by attacking its causes. Still, on the whole, good was done; for even indiscriminate almsgiving, if it created pauperism, was probably better than dependence founded on a civic right to relief. For the pauper stood higher than the slave; the first was at least free to support himself, which the second was not.¹ Rather by its teaching, which made slave-holding by Christians impossible—though this reform was only very gradually carried out—than by any sound theory of charity and its distribution, the Church prepared the way for better social conditions under which men might learn the duty of doing all in their power to support themselves and their families in independency of external help whether civic or eleemosynary.

To understand the work of the Church for the poor, not only during the Middle Ages, but indeed from its earliest days, it is essential to gain at least some conception of the principles upon which it was based—that is, of the ideas which inspired it. These principles have been grouped under the term “The Theory of

¹ Loch, p. 234 *et seq.*

Charity," and the title is a useful, if not altogether a satisfactory, one.

This "theory," or these principles, changed in process of time, chiefly because Christian doctrine itself changed. I do not imply that the practice of charity was always in strict agreement with these principles, but undoubtedly the principles did very greatly influence the practice. From time to time a change of circumstances also demanded a change of practice. It would not be quite true to speak of a "development" of this theory, or even of "revisions" of it. By development we generally mean a change from the less to the more perfect, from an inferior to a superior condition. But this is not true either of the change of Christian doctrine generally, or of the theory of charity in particular, during the long period which stretches from the Conversion of the Empire to the Reformation. In many ways and at various times during this period Christian doctrine departed further and further from the truth; so also did the principles of charity, which were commonly held, from those which we believe to be correct.

The subject of changes in the principles underlying the distribution of charity is an extensive one, and I must confine myself to the examination of two points: First, the growth within the Church of the idea that almsgiving procured remission of sins; secondly, the greatly increased proportion of "institutional" relief through the hospitals and monasteries of various kinds.

Traces of the idea that sins could be remitted by almsgiving are found very early. By Origen it is held to be a means of covering slighter transgressions; but by Cyprian the doctrine is clearly taught.¹ As Archbishop Benson says, "There can be no better illustration than this teaching (in which a distinct propitiatory value is assigned to our own action) of the combined results in the development of doctrine, of resorting to the Jewish Apocrypha, relying on a version, and constructing a theory from a word. When this thread of erroneous, or at least

¹ Uhlhorn, "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," p. 211 *et seq.*

ambiguous, theory was presently woven in with Tertullian's new forensic language on satisfaction being made to God by penance, a commencement of much mediæval trouble was at hand."¹

This teaching of the propitiatory value of almsgiving spread rapidly. In the East we find it insisted upon by Chrysostom,² while in the West Ambrose,³ Augustine,⁴ and Gregory the Great dwell strongly upon it. It became, in fact, an established doctrine of the Church, and continued to be so throughout the Middle Ages. Indeed, something not very different from it goes far to vitiate much of our almsgiving at the present day. I do not assert that English Church people give alms with the same intention as that recommended by Chrysostom or Gregory the Great; but far too often, from mental indolence—*i.e.*, from a want of clear thinking, the duty or satisfaction of the giver rather than the needs or the condition or the worthiness of the recipient, is the deciding factor in an act of charity. Too often we give simply because we "feel it our duty," or because we do not like to refuse, or because public opinion demands it, or in order to stifle the qualms of conscience. We do not give because we have made a thorough investigation into the circumstances and character and needs of those who appeal for help, and because we feel we can and ought to give really useful and substantial help in a particular way. To this extent much of our giving to-day resembles that of the Middle Ages—it is rather "self-regarding"; instead of being like the giving inculcated in the New Testament and practised in the earliest age of the Church—"other-regarding."

¹ Archbishop Benson's footnote is as follows: "Such are distinctly the sources of the idea: Sicut *aqua* (*i.e.*, Baptism) extinguet ignem (*i.e.*, gehenna) sic eleemosyna *extinguet* peccatum (Sirach iii. 30), and again, Prov. xvi. 6: 'Misericordia et veritate redimitur iniquitas' (xv. 27: 'per misericordiam et fidem purgantur peccata'), which, in the African version, was '*Eleemosynis et fide delicta purgantur*'" (Archbishop Benson's "Cyprian," p. 249).

² "With whatsoever sins thou mayest be burdened, thy charity outweighs them all" (Homily on "Penance," iii. 1). "Let us purchase salvation through alms" (Homily on "Penance," vii. 6).

³ "They who have kindled the flames by sinning, may extinguish them by almsgiving" ("Sermo de Eleemosynis," c. 30, 31).

⁴ "Men are cleansed by alms from those sins and transgressions without which life cannot be passed here below." (These are only a few of the quotations given in Uhlhorn, p. 279 *et seq.*)

Arising in part from this doctrine of the propitiatory value of almsgiving, but also due to one of the many survivals of heathen customs which were taken over or absorbed by the Church, there came into existence another source whence a very considerable amount of money became available to the Church for distribution to the poor. I refer to the idea that almsgiving affects the sufferings of souls in purgatory. By the time of Cyprian it was held that Masses could be offered for the dead to their advantage.¹ Augustine adds the idea that alms could be offered efficaciously for them.² Alms were also given at funerals and on the anniversaries of deaths, in order that their merit might avail for the deceased. We must remember the reverence of the ancient world for the dead. Frequently, among the heathen, money was bequeathed in order that the grave might be decorated on the birthday of the one buried in it, and in order that a feast might be held at it.³ At such times money was often distributed to the members of the *collegium* to which the deceased had belonged or to his fellow citizens. The Church so far changed this system as to substitute for the banquet a celebration of the Mass, and directed that the money should now be given to the poor. Hence the origin of endowments for Masses for the dead, and of the custom of distributing alms on the anniversary of a death. It is true that teachers like Augustine and Gregory⁴ are careful to maintain that only those will be benefited who on earth have not been guilty of great, but only of trivial, sins. But it will easily be understood that in practice it was difficult to maintain this distinction. When we say that these propitiatory means were not to be used for those whose lives had plunged them into perdition,

¹ Uhlhorn, p. 288.

² "Neque negandum est defunctorum animas pietate suorum viventium relevari, cum pro illis sacrificium Mediatoris offertur, vel eleemosynæ in Ecclesia fiunt." But Augustine is careful to add: "Sed eis hæc prosunt, qui cum viverent, ut hæc sibi postea possint prodesse, meruerunt" ("Enchiridion," c. 110).

³ Uhlhorn, p. 290 *et seq.*

⁴ Who adduces 1 Cor. iii. 11 in support of this. Uhlhorn refers to Greg. M. Dialog., iv. 39, 57.

but had only sent them to purgatory, we can see how easy it was to decide charitably, especially when money was much needed both for the clergy and the poor. Salvian, in fact, admits that almsgiving *may* help even the quite wicked, and Augustine allows the possibility of a *mitigation* of perdition.¹

I have shown enough to prove how strong was the temptation to the Church (especially in such an hour of need as the beginning of the Middle Ages) to succumb to the use of more and more doubtful means for obtaining the resources which she believed she needed. To that temptation she did, unfortunately, succumb. And it was a case that, when once the principle had been admitted, the applications became constantly wider and more numerous. The results, so far as the moral life and moral influence of the Church were concerned, were nothing less than disastrous, and these results persisted to the time of the Reformation.

The effects of the doctrinal teaching of the early Middle Ages upon institutional relief I must defer to the next chapter.

¹ Augustine's words are curious: "Pro valde malis, etiamsi nulla sunt adjumenta mortuorum, qualescunque vivorum consolationes sunt. Quibus autem prosunt, aut ad hoc prosunt, ut sit plena remissio, aut certe ut tolerabilior fiat ipsa damnatio" ("Enchirid.," c. 110).

V.

THE MIDDLE AGES.

1. *Institutional Relief: The Hospitals and Monasteries.*

THE greatest of all influences upon Christian doctrine throughout the Middle Ages was undoubtedly that of St. Augustine. His teaching had also an immense effect upon the ideas of charity. Harnack shows quite clearly that it was as a "reformer of piety" that Augustine's really greatest work was done.¹ To understand the influence of Augustine upon the medieval theory of charity it is necessary to notice the following sequence of ideas²: Augustine starts from the thesis that love or desire (*amor* or *cupido*) is the strongest of all powers which man can use in his efforts to assert or express himself—an effort which is implied in the very consciousness of life or possession of vital energy. Next Augustine taught that the highest and sweetest enjoyment (the object of love) was to be found in the sense of the love of God (the Well of Life and the Fountain of all Good), and therefore from the certainty of "grace." Now, love, like faith, springs from God, for both are the means whereby we enter into communion with God, and are enabled to appropriate Him. Man's redemption through Christ Jesus "takes place through grace and love, and in turn through faith and love." In this process the part or action of love is *humbly* to renounce all that is its own, and to long for God and His law.

¹ "Augustine is in the first place to be estimated . . . as a reformer of Christian piety" (Harnack, "Hist. of Dogma," Eng. trans., vol. v., p. 67).

² For a brief summary of Augustine's line of thought, see Loch, "Charity and Social Life," p. 252 *et seq.* See also Harnack, "Das Mönchthum, seine Ideale und seine Geschichte," p. 36 *et seq.*

Moreover, the peace of God is shed upon the soul which has the living God for its Friend. That which mars this Divine peace is sin. And the misery of sin overcome by faith, humility, and love, is Christian piety. In this temper the Christian must live.¹

It will at once be seen that this doctrine was capable of wide application. The direction of thought was introspective, and turned the mind "towards hope, asceticism, and the contemplation of God in worship."² Thus, by Augustine's doctrine a high value was given to a life in which these three elements were paramount. The first—hope—could not be connected with any one form or expression of Christianity more than another; but for asceticism and the contemplation of God in worship it was felt that the monastic life offered the fullest opportunity.³

Hence in the early Middle Ages we witness an immense growth in monasticism, and an attempt, generally successful, to teach that the religious life and the monastic life were identical, so much so that those living the monastic life were ultimately regarded as "the religious"—that is, those who attempted and achieved a higher and more perfect form of Christianity than those living in "the world."⁴ Gradually all that was connected with Christianity became more or less connected with monasticism, and, among other Christian works or duties, that of charity or the relief of the poor. Western monasticism did not in any way owe its origin to Augustine, but undoubtedly in its rapid growth it received an immense impetus from his teaching, and especially from his conception of Christian piety.

I now propose to give a brief account of the work done by

¹ See Harnack, *ibid.*, vol. v., p. 71.

² Loch, *ibid.*, p. 253.

³ Upon the influence of Augustine upon Bernard, whom he terms *Augustinus redivivus*, see Harnack, vol. vi., p. 10. How Bernard, and after him Francis of Assisi, revived belief in the historical Christ must not be forgotten.

⁴ On monasticism as a return to the aristocratic tendencies of the old world, see Uhlhorn, "Charity in the Ancient Church," p. 340 *et seq.*; also Harnack, "Das Mönchthum," p. 49: "Das abendländische Mönchthum war bis zum Schlusse des zwölften Jahrhunderts auch noch ganz wesentlich eine aristokratische Institution gewesen."

the Church for the poor through *institutions* (whether monastic or otherwise) during the early Middle Ages. The subject is an immense one, and all I can hope to do is to indicate the points of chief importance. I may at once state that, certainly from the fourth century, we see the system which to-day is termed "institutional relief" carried on side by side with that which is now known as "home aliment," and, at any rate so far as the Church was concerned, gradually superseding it.

The earliest institutions for the relief of the poor were the *xenodochia*—literally, houses for strangers, but in which there were frequently lodged all who needed an asylum: viz., travellers, sick, widows, orphans; indeed, practically all who suffered from poverty or inability to maintain themselves. I cannot here deal with the subject of pre-Christian hospices—such, for instance, as those connected with temples of Æsculapius,¹ or Jewish inns at which no money was taken.² I must confine myself strictly to Christian institutions.

Some have considered that the *xenodochia*, or hospitals (in the true, but not present, sense of the word), mark a downward step in Christian charity. Much more probably they were an attempt to cope with altered conditions and with new needs. When Christians were few, so would be the number of these requiring shelter and care. It would then be possible to provide for such persons in the houses of bishops or private members of the Church.³ But when, after the conversion of the Empire the number of Christians enormously increased it became necessary to establish special institutions for them. Originally, as I have already implied, the *xenodochion* sheltered people needing help from various causes; but later we find a variety of institutions each devoted to a special class of sufferers.⁴

It is impossible to say when the first *xenodochia* were founded. There seems to be no trustworthy evidence of their

¹ Uhlhorn, p. 323.

² Loch, p. 196.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 2.

⁴ In the Cod. Just., lib. i., tit. ii., l. 22, we have, *e.g.*, *ptochotrophia*, *orphanotrophia*, *gerontocomia*, *noscomia*, *brephotrophia*, etc. Institutions for the blind, the dumb, and for lunatics, also existed (Ratzinger, pp. 143, 144).

existence during the reign of Constantine. The first indubitable proof that they did exist comes from the letter of Julian to Arascius, in which Julian orders that a xenodochion shall be established in every city, and for which he makes legal provision.¹ From the letter it appears to be clear that Julian was led to do this by the examples of Christian xenodochia and ptochotrophia, which then evidently existed widely. About A.D. 370 Basil founded his famous hospital at Cæsarea in Cappadocia, though before that ptochotrophia existed there. Epiphanius tells of them in Pontus, and when Chrysostom preached in Antioch there was one there; he himself founded two in Constantinople.²

From the East the xenodochion passed over into the West, and at first, even in Italy, the hospital was known by this name rather than by the Latin terms *hospitale* or *hospitium*. The first hospitals in the West are supposed to have been the house for the sick founded by Fabiola in Rome, and the house for strangers established by Pammachius at Portus (Oporto). But they did not multiply in the West as they did in the East. There were no xenodochia in Milan during the bishopric of Ambrose, and Augustine mentions them as a novelty; Pope Symmachus founded three, and Belisarius founded and endowed one in Rome. In Gaul they existed by the middle of the sixth century, and a little later "a home for strangers and the poor was reckoned among necessary ecclesiastical arrangements."³ It is interesting to notice that according to the plan of Basil the xenodochion was not to be merely a refuge for the wayfarer and the sick; it was also to be an asylum for the workless. It was actually to combine the idea of the hospital and the work-house in the fullest sense of the latter word.⁴

At first, whether founded by the bishop himself or by lay-people, the xenodochion was strictly under the personal control of the bishop of the diocese. He chose the superintendent, who was a priest, and laid down stringent rules with regard to both the receipts and the expenditure. Upon the bishop also lay

¹ Uhlhorn, p. 326.

² *Ibid.*, p. 327.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

⁴ Ratzinger, "Armenpflege," p. 142: "Er wollte . . . die Idee eines Hospitals mit der eines Arbeitshauses combiniren."

the responsibility of protecting the property of the institution. The care of the sick was entrusted to deaconesses and widows, who were maintained by the Church. There were also frequently lay-brothers who gave assistance, and physicians were not wanting.¹ In the East one class of helpers in connection with the xenodochia were the *Parabolani*, whose duty was to seek out the sick and suffering and to bring them in; then there were the *Copiates*, who buried the dead.² There were also some who sought to atone for former sins by gratuitously serving in these hospitals.

Before proceeding to consider the monastery, as the other great institution for the relief of the poor, I may notice that between the xenodochion, or hospital, and the monastery there were many connections and similarities; indeed, the two institutions were frequently found in combination. Each revealed features of the other.³ Those who ministered in the xenodochia generally lived a monastic life, and Gregory the Great goes so far as to require that only the *religiosi* (i.e., monks) should be chosen as presidents of the hospitals.⁴ Another point of connection lies here: both classes of institutions gradually escaped from episcopal control. They became more and more independent, and only subject to the Pope or the King or to the heads and members of their Order. Further, both hospitals and monasteries began to place themselves under some common rule and to become members of some common Order. From these various reasons they were able to become more independent channels of relief, and frequently the means at their command for dispensing this were far greater than either those of the bishop or of the parochial clergy.⁵

I have no intention of dealing with the subject of monasticism generally⁶; I am only concerned with it as an instrument

¹ Ratzinger, p. 145, who quotes Häfer: "Auch in diesem Zeitraume gab es unter den Presbytern viele tüchtige Aerzte."

² Uhlhorn, p. 335. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 336. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 337. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁶ One of the ablest and most judicious examinations of the whole subject will be found in Professor Harnack's lecture, "Das Mönchthum, seine Ideale und seine Geschichte."

for the relief of the poor. Two points I have already made clear : First, that the changes in doctrine due to Augustine and others ministered to its growth, because they put a high value on those virtues which were specially the product of the monastic life, or could be best cultivated by that life ; secondly, because, in the rough times which followed the break-up of the old Empire, undoubtedly the monasteries did a work which no other institution, so far as we can see, could have done ; they met an urgent need.

One most valuable service which the monasteries rendered should never be forgotten. They emphasized the obligation of work.¹ In this they were entirely true to the teaching of the New Testament.² The old world, with its aristocratic tendencies, had despised manual labour of almost every kind. It regarded it as a painful necessity, which whenever possible should be delegated to others who could support themselves in no other way. To work was the avocation of the slave, not of the free man—indeed, not of anyone who could in any way escape doing it.

The monasteries were the birthplaces of free labour.³ In them was first asserted that the practice of work was an evidence of Christian life. In Holy Scripture, as is well known, work and benevolence are connected ; the one found the means for the other.⁴ So it was in the monasteries. We must not imagine that their endowments, furnished by others, were the sole source of the wealth of the monasteries. These certainly were often great ; but where, as in the monasteries, we find diligent work combined with considerable skill, there wealth generally increases. Then, in the monasteries there was work in combination ; we may say that they were the earliest co-operative associations. Basil in his rules for monks clearly states that it

¹ Ratzinger, p. 146 *et seq.*

² 1 Thess. iv. 11 ; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 11.

³ "Entstanden in der absterbenden römischen Welt die Klostergemeinden, in welchen die beiden grossen Principien der freien Arbeit und der Verwertung des Besitzes im Dienste Aller ihre Verwirklichung fanden" (Ratzinger, *ibid.*).

⁴ Eph. iv. 28.

is among the duties of a monk to work¹; he further states that the chief object of his work must be to support the needy.² His directions as to the kind of work to be chosen are eminently practical. The monks must think what kind of raw material can be most easily procured in the neighbourhood, and they must try to make what will command a ready sale.³ Augustine wrote a book on "The Work of Monks." According to the Rule of St. Benedict, the day began with four hours of work; after dinner there was a time of rest, then work until supper, and after supper more work. The diet of the monks was to be regulated according to the amount of hard work to be done. The monks, of course, were great cultivators; they were excellent agriculturists, and in those days, besides there being immense tracts of land which needed to be brought into cultivation, there was also, especially in France, much land which during troublous times had become almost a desert and required to be recultivated.⁴ From the monks the new nations learnt both agriculture and handicraft. Lastly, according to the Rule of St. Benedict, among other works to which a monk was particularly to devote himself was that of philanthropy⁵; having provided the means for this, he must expend those means upon it. Work in the monasteries was also sometimes regarded as a moral restorative, as not merely a sign of penitence, but as a means of expiation and forgiveness.⁶ It was even regarded as more important than fasting. If fasting hindered work, then fasting must give way.⁷ We must also remember that the monastery was the home of "common possession."⁸ Thus, at least ideally, the monastic life was a safeguard against covetousness. A well-regulated monastery was

¹ "In der Regel des hl. Basilius bildet die Arbeit den Angelpunkt des ganzen Mönchlebens" (Ratzinger, p. 148).

² Uhlhorn, "Christian Charity in the Ancient Church," p. 353.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Sie roden Wälder aus, sie schaffen Wüsteneien zu Ackerland" (Harnack, "Das Mönchthum," p. 41).

⁵ Uhlhorn, p. 359.

⁶ "Als sittlicher Beruf und als Mittel der Busse, Sühne, und Erlösung" (Ratzinger, p. 147).

⁷ Basil, Regul. 38.

⁸ Ratzinger, p. 148.

an enormous boon to the district surrounding it—sometimes, indeed, to those living far away, for cases are on record where not only money, but even supplies of such necessities as corn, were sent long distances to those in need.¹ One of the most effectual ways of helping the poor is by providing education for their children. The monasteries did a great work in this way.² Connected with, or rather as part of, them there was generally a school in which many a poor boy obtained the learning which afterwards enabled him to live a life of usefulness, and not infrequently to rise to a position of eminence. In the nunneries girls were also taught much that was useful to them in later years.³ Then, there can be no doubt that the best monks and the best-organized monasteries (as communities) exercised an immense influence through the examples of “spiritual heroism” which they exhibited, and the power of a community which has risen to this level is always greater than the power exercised by even a number of independent individuals.⁴

One cause of the enlarged power of the monasteries to help the poor must not be forgotten. During the rough ages of feudalism undoubtedly much robbery of the funds of parish churches took place.⁵ Feudal barons, and even feudal bishops, were guilty of this crime. When strong ecclesiastical rulers arose, they compelled these to disgorge at least a portion of their ill-gotten gains. But very frequently what they gave up was bestowed upon the monasteries rather than upon the parishes.⁶ For this course the following reason was given: By “the poor”—for whose support, according to the ancient custom of the Church, a portion of the Church’s wealth should be devoted—was meant, not the poor people in the parishes, but the monks and nuns, who for the Gospel’s sake had renounced all, and had “for Christ’s sake become poor.” They are the true *pauperes Christi*.⁷ This was the theory maintained in the

¹ Uhlhorn, p. 359.

² Both Basil and Chrysostom lay stress on this.

³ Ratzinger, p. 150 (who quotes Augustine for this).

⁴ Ratzinger, p. 151.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.* (Ratzinger gives the authorities for this).

False Decretals, which, in spite of their origin, exercised an immense influence over the customs of the Church.¹ Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Clugny, appealed to the practical advantages of the change: "Who is best entitled to the gifts of the faithful, the monks who constantly pray to God on behalf of sinners, or the worldly clergy, who, as one sees, expend all their energies on the increase of their possessions and entirely neglect the care of souls?"² It must not be inferred that the poor always ultimately suffered. It was not that the final disposition or object of the Church's wealth was altogether changed; what was altered was the channel through which it was dispensed. For a considerable period (except perhaps in England)³ relief of the poor through the parochial clergy practically ceased; it became the work of the monasteries. Ratzinger states that in the Decretal of Gratian, "which from the middle of the twelfth century was regarded as a standard handbook in the Church," there is no mention of any recognized system of relief other than monastic.⁴ One result of this neglect was an enormous increase of mendicancy, to check which many attempts were made, but without much result.⁵ This is an instance of an experience of which the history of poor relief furnishes only too many examples—namely, that every change of system falls heavily for a time upon some particular class. Undoubtedly, the dissolution of the monasteries at the time of the Reformation increased, at least temporarily, the amount of extreme poverty. This was again the case, at least for a few years, after the enactment of the "New" Poor Law in 1834.

¹ Upon "The False Decretals," see Milman, "Latin Christianity," vol. iii., p. 190 *et seq.*

² Ratzinger, p. 282.

³ Upon this Ratzinger is very positive: "In England erhielt sich das ganze Mittelalter hindurch die kirchliche Gemeinde-Armenpflege, wie sie im karolingische Zeitalter geordnet worden war" (p. 421; see also authorities quoted).

⁴ "In dem *Decretum Gratiani* . . . findet sich keine Spur mehr von einer geordneten kirchlichen Armenpflege" (Ratzinger, p. 305 *et seq.*).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

2. *St. Francis of Assisi: The Mendicants.*

There was one movement in the later Middle Ages which had far-reaching consequences, and to which more than a passing reference must be made, though actually this movement had, on the whole, far less direct connection with our present subject than is generally supposed.¹ I refer to the work of the mendicant Orders, and especially to that of St. Francis of Assisi. In his work some of the most dominating ideas of the Middle Ages, both theological and social, find their clearest expression. Francis, like Augustine, was a "reformer of piety." It is his conception of the Christian life, founded upon certain doctrines—in which the true and the false were strangely blended—that is the key to his work and that of his followers.² Actually to understand this conception, we ought to go behind Francis to St. Bernard and his teaching of "humility before God and love to the sorely suffering Redeemer." But it was in Francis, as it has been well said, that "the chord—humility, love, and obedience—was struck with the greatest purity, while the tone which he lent to it was the most melting." We have already seen the high estimate attached (at least in theory) to poverty throughout the Middle Ages. In fact, there is almost an assumption that poverty and righteousness are necessarily allied. A natural consequence of this was the extreme sanctity attributed to voluntary poverty. But the doctrine had another and very evil issue. As poverty was a state to be admired, it was not a condition to be abolished. Endless efforts were made to relieve it, to mitigate its sufferings, but none to remove its causes. It is upon the philanthropy of St. Francis that stress is usually laid; but it is to his theology that we should

¹ The Friars were primarily preachers; they produced the great thinkers and theologians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; they gave a new impetus to science and art, also to politics. In this connection, Dr. Workman points out that "In the coming of the friars, to a lesser extent also in the earlier monastic movement, we note the most successful effort ever made towards constructive socialism" ("Christ and Civilization," p. 296).

² Harnack, "History of Dogma," vol. vi., p. 85 *et seq.* (Harnack points out how Sabatier's charming "Life of St. Francis" needs to be read with discriminating criticism.)

rather pay attention, for this is the true key to his conduct. The central ideal of St. Francis was "imitation of the poor life of Jesus," but poverty meant more than this; it meant imitation of the apostolic life, "the life of the pilgrim preacher." It meant the life of service, issuing in warm compassion and in self-abasement, expressed in preaching repentance, but also in deeds of mercy of very various kinds.¹

Both to the student of history and to the student of social science, the life and method of St. Francis are full of interest. From him we learn both what to cultivate and of what to beware. His teaching is full of paradoxes, which are ever the danger of extremists. While he revived the truth of the value of the individual, he (as Bishop Westcott points out) destroyed individuality.² He ignored the truth which every scientifically-minded philanthropist realizes, that it is not in the destruction of individuality, but in its purification and transformation, in awakening it to a nobler energy and a keener sense of responsibility, that hope lies. The imperfect, or perhaps rather disproportionate, creed of St. Francis had one fatal result: "The tender devotion of Francis to the Lord's manhood became the occasion of grievous error. Everything that is compassionate in the character of the Lord was separated from His sovereign righteousness."³ If in our dealings with the poor we forget that these two cannot be separated, our work is doomed to failure. I have seen case after case ruined because together with sympathy for suffering and help in distress there did not go a demand for the fulfilment of the law of righteousness. In spite of his wonderful powers of humility, sympathy, self-sacrifice, and faith, the work of Francis, if measured by the test of permanently benefiting the condition of the poor, cannot be pronounced a success.

¹ Harnack, vol. vi., p. 85.

² "Social Aspects of Christianity," p. 109 *et seq.* Bishop Westcott also points out how Francis "disregarded also the Divine office of nations for the race. He strove . . . to seize the conception of humanity without recognizing the form of life through which God is pleased to reveal to us the rich fulness of the whole" (p. 110).

³ Westcott, *ibid.*, p. 111.

If Francis of Assisi represents the highest point reached in the Middle Ages in charity on its active and practical, we might also add on its emotional, side, it is Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican, who has bequeathed to us the completest exposition of the theory of medieval charity.¹ To him alms are the instrument of pity, and their effects are tested by the recipient being moved to pray for the benefactor. The gift should simply meet the actual necessities of the recipient. He seems to hold it is better to give a little to many rather than much to one. Thomas (though an Aristotelian) does not press the importance of purpose in the giver, and he forgets "that gifts without purpose and reciprocity foster the dependence they are designed to meet."² To Thomas there are seven spiritual acts—to counsel, sustain, teach, console, save, pardon, and pray; there are also seven corporal acts—to clothe, to give drink to, to feed, to free from prison, to shelter, to assist in sickness, and to bury. These of course became "good works"; they availed, as boons after this life, and later became connected with indulgences.³ With him, as with other medieval teachers, the benefit of almsgiving is primarily to the donor; the deed itself, and not its usefulness or results, is the first consideration. "An extreme inducement is placed on giving . . . but none on the personal or social utility of the gift." In all this we can see that the social aims and social purposes of charity were ignored, and thus its power for good was neutralized.

Before closing this chapter I will attempt to gather up the lessons to be learnt from a study of the spirit and methods of charity during the Middle Ages. First, the Church's methods were governed by the theology then dominant—in other words, by the religious views then current. Here, as always, doctrine is the motive power of conduct. Throughout we find the con-

¹ On the doctrinal position of Thomas, see Harnack, "History of Dogma," vol. vi., p. 149 *et seq.* Many quotations from Thomas upon Charity will be found in Ratzinger's footnotes, p. 381 *et seq.* Also see Loch, "Charity and Social Life," p. 257 *et seq.*

² Loch, p. 261.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

viction that poverty in itself is a state to be honoured¹; it is not a condition to be abolished, but to be relieved. There is never any effort to remove its causes. If pauperism means dependence, there is no organized attack upon pauperism. Then, we have the gradual transference of poor relief from the parochial clergy to the monastic institutions. From the tenth century onwards—except in England and in the case of the poor on the great estates, for whom the owners of these were responsible—the relief of distress was almost entirely the work of the monasteries and the hospitals. It has been charged against the Church that she did little to abolish slavery and serfdom. But we must remember the conditions of the age, and that so long as serfdom existed there was secured to the serf at least the means of subsistence. The Church, with her immense estates, was probably the largest serf-holder, and there is evidence to show that her serfs were generally far better treated than those of lay proprietors.² Great as some of the evils connected with the system undoubtedly were, we may question whether in its practical working medieval serfdom was quite so evil as it seems to us to-day. "We may well doubt whether the landless peasantry of modern England, though nominally free, is in reality much better off than the medieval villein whose land was secured to him by custom."³

The doctrine of almsgiving in the Middle Ages was weakest from its strongly self-regarding aspect. But we must remember that this evil is far from having wholly passed away. To-day there

¹ "The Middle Ages—unlike the twentieth century—was not afraid of poverty; poverty was not the one evil of life which more than any other must be shunned. So far from looking upon poverty as a crime or stigma, the medieval Church erred rather in the opposite direction in elevating poverty, provided it was voluntary, into the mark of saintliness. . . . The Church of the Middle Ages was at least true to its Founder in refusing to recognize the ideal of life in the successful millionaire" (Dr. Workman in "Christ and Civilization," p. 301).

² "The abolition of serfdom was hindered by the great number of serfs attached to the estates of the Church. Many of these were originally free peasants who had bartered their liberty for the greater security and protection which the spiritual overlord could give them" (Dr. Workman in "Christ and Civilization," p. 298).

³ *Ibid.*

are thousands of people who give rather to salve their own consciences than because (after having taken all possible trouble to find out the real needs of those who ask assistance, and how best to supply this) they are anxious to give the best help they can.

Undoubtedly, medieval philanthropy came to its fairest flower in the work of St. Francis of Assisi, and I may be charged with having done far less than justice to the work which he and his followers accomplished. But we must remember that the movement very rapidly changed its character. At first, both in spirit and method, it was intensely democratic. It took religion and charity outside the monastery into the common life of the people. The needs of the people were studied and supplied where they existed, especially in the poorer quarters of the towns. This was well. But, on the other hand, the glorification of dependence preached by Francis and his followers produced a rich crop of permanent evil. It made begging more than ever a profession, and one to which there should be no shame attached. Archbishop Trench, in his "Lectures upon Medieval Church History," goes so far as to assert that the want of self-respect still evinced in this matter in certain parts of Europe is an inheritance from the followers of St. Francis, and that, "little as he foresaw or intended this, he did much to bequeath to those lands the eating sore of an almost universal mendicancy."¹ Thus, the purest intentions coupled with enthusiasm will not avail to promote the welfare of the people where we find either ignorance or neglect of those laws upon obedience to which social welfare permanently depends.

¹ P. 246 *et seq.*

VI.

THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

FROM the coming of the Friars to England, about A.D. 1224, to the Reformation is almost exactly three hundred years. This period is one of great interest; but its adequate study, and still more an adequate presentation of its leading features within the space of a few pages, involves very considerable difficulties. It witnessed certain social movements of great importance, and writers upon the period are not entirely agreed as to the chief causes of some of these. Of course, the sources of our information for this epoch are far more full than are those for any previous epoch which we have considered. Because my space is limited, and because I wish to deal as clearly as I can with the main features of this period, I shall confine myself almost altogether to what took place in England, and to showing how the Church in our own country attempted—and unfortunately to a great extent failed—to meet the rapidly changing conditions in the social life of the people. To form a just estimate of the Church's work it is most important to have as clear as possible an idea of those conditions.

The period is divided into two almost equal parts by the "Black Death," which ravaged this country as it did others about 1348-49, and by which it is estimated that between a third and a half of the people of England perished.¹ The economic results of this terrible scourge were immense. One of these was naturally an immediate scarcity of labour,²

¹ Green, "Short History of English People," p. 241, says "more than half"; Cunningham, "Western Civilization," p. 144, says, "about a half."

² Preamble to "Statute of Labourers," 23 Edward III., A.D. 1349.

another was a very rapid rise in the price of food.¹ These changes were not entirely due to the Black Death, because for some time previous to this very considerable alterations had been taking place in the manorial system—for instance, many of the serfs had already begun to pay a money commutation in lieu of work ; in other words, they had commenced to pay rent instead of rendering personal service.² After the Black Death the peasants still desired to pay the same rent they had previously paid, but the landlords found that as prices had doubled they could only hire labourers by paying them double wages. This was probably the root cause of such movements as the Peasants' Revolt ; the Poll Tax was only the match which set fire to a seething mass of industrial discontent. Parliament, which at this time represented simply the interests of the landlords, tried to interfere. It attempted to regulate wages *before* it regulated prices.³ Consequently the peasants found they could not procure even food for the amount of wages which Parliament tried to force them to accept. Another method attempted by the landlords was to refuse commutation payment—*i.e.*, rent in lieu of service ; but men who had once tasted freedom would not be driven back into slavery.

Thus, as labour could not be obtained at the old rates, and as service could not be re-exacted without violence and murder, another plan must be tried : either new arrangements must be made with labour, or less labour must be employed. Some landowners granted land on lease to tenants for a rent, and then the tenant had to find the labour. Here we have the origin of the modern tenant-farmer, as a kind of middleman between the landowner and the labourer. Other landowners found that, as wool was growing in demand, sheep-farming paid better than

¹ By an Act of 1363 an attempt was made to regulate the price of provisions.

² Meredith, "Economic History of England," pp. 43 *et seq.* ; Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., pp. 30 *et seq.* See also Trevelyan, "England in the Age of Wycliffe," p. 185.

³ The Statute of Labourers was passed in A.D. 1349, and amended in 1350-51, while prices seem to have been first regulated in 1363.

arable farming, because much less labour was needed.¹ But this meant that a large number of people were thrown out of employment. The landowners also, for the purpose of increasing pasturage for sheep, began to enclose common or waste land on which the serfs had pastured their cattle ; this, again, pressed heavily upon the poor.²

Side by side with these movements among the peasantry, there proceeded throughout this period many changes in town life. The genesis and growth of the English town—to which we find no exact parallel in other countries—is a most interesting subject.³ While the struggle of the townsmen for freedom and self-government was on the whole peacefully effected in England, on the Continent, especially on the Rhineland, it was frequently marked by considerable bloodshed. Among the many causes which contributed to the growth of the towns, two stand pre-eminent : one being the development of trade, the other being the desire for freedom. If a serf or villein could prove a residence in a town of a year and a day, he therewith became free of his owner.⁴ Consequently the towns became a refuge for very different kinds of characters, some of these being very undesirable. The struggles between the original inhabitants who owned land in the town and the people who for various reasons flocked into the town, were frequently severe. And it will easily be understood that in those days, when scientific sanitation and the conditions of public health were unknown, the poorer quarters of the towns became hotbeds of sickness and misery.⁵ In their earliest days the Franciscan Friars did a noble work among the sick and the

¹ The history of the English wool trade from the thirteenth century is full of interest. See Thorold Rogers, "Economic Interpretation of History," pp. 9 *et seq.*

² Meredith, "Economic of History of England," pp. 42 *et seq.*, 115 *et seq.* This was the subject of legislation as early as the Statute of Merton in A.D. 1235.

³ Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 *et seq.*

⁴ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 64.

⁵ The death-rate from the Black Death was much greater in the towns than in the country.

wretched ; and they generally fixed their houses among the worst of the slums. Those who would understand the social life and especially the social difficulties and evils of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries must pay particular attention to the conditions existing in the towns, and to the changes which took place in these. I use the term "changes" rather than "development" because there appears to have been a diminution in the relative importance and influence of the towns towards the end of the fifteenth century.¹ There seems to have then arisen a tendency for manufacturing industries to desert the towns for the country ; also it appears to have become more difficult to induce substantial men to undertake the burdens of municipal government.²

One means whereby we may gain much insight into the conditions of any period is by studying the various laws—for the correction of evils, the regulation of life, and the protection of property—enacted within it. A study of certain Acts of Parliament passed during the period we are considering is extremely instructive. I would now draw attention to a few of these connected with our present subject, say from the middle of the fourteenth century. By Acts passed in 1335 and 1350 for the freedom of buying and selling,³ we have an assertion of the great principle that privileges were not to be enjoyed by one class to the injury of another. In 1349 we have the celebrated "Statute of Labourers," by which, among other things, it was enacted "that because many valiant beggars, as long as they may live of begging, do refuse to labour, giving themselves to idleness and vice . . . none, upon pain of imprisonment, shall, under the colour of pity or alms, give anything to such which may labour, or presume to favour them in their sloth, so that thereby they may be compelled to labour for

¹ Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 123. The national consciousness grew, and the nation rather than the town became the centre of interest.

² Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 124.

³ By the Act of 1335 (9 Edward III.) it was enacted "that all merchants, strangers, and denizens . . . may freely, without interruption, sell to what persons it shall please them."

their necessary living." Two points in reference to this statute should be noticed : first, it is not prohibited to help those who are not able to work ; secondly, no statutory provision is made for these.¹ By the same law it was enacted that "no man pay, or promise to pay, any servant any more wages, liveries, meed, or salary than was wont"—*i.e.*, before the Great Plague ; also it was further enacted that "butchers, fishmongers, hostellers, brewers, bakers, pulters, and all other sellers of all manner of victual shall be bound to sell the same for a reasonable price."² A copy of this statute was sent to each of the Bishops to be published in the churches, with the request that he would "direct the parsons, vicars, ministers of such churches and others under him, to exhort and invite their parishioners, by salutary admonitions, to labour and observe the ordinances aforesaid, as the present necessity requireth."³

It is one thing to pass a law, it is another thing to get it obeyed ; and apparently very great difficulty was found in getting the people to obey this particular law, for in less than two years⁴ another Act was passed amending and continuing it. In the preamble to this Act it is stated that "servants having no regard to the said ordinance, but to their ease and general covetize, do withdraw themselves . . . unless they have livery and wages to the double or treble of what they were wont to take before." The Act then proceeds to define with great particularity the various scales of wages which shall be paid to various classes of workers.⁵ In the same Act we have what may perhaps be regarded as the first trace of the "law of settlement," which has continued in force down to the present time ; for it directs that "none [of the workers] go out of the town

¹ It is apparently still assumed that the resources of charity will suffice.

² But the "reasonable price" is not fixed or defined as by the Act of 1363.

³ Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 39.

⁴ In 1350-51 (25 Edward III.).

⁵ *E.g.*, "a mower of meadows is to be paid 5d. for an acre, or 5d. a day ; reapers of corn 2d. an acre in the first week in August, 3d. in subsequent weeks ; a master-carpenter is to have 3d. a day, a master-mason 4d., and their servants 1d. The pay of a common soldier at that date was 6d. a day, or about 5s. of our money" (Hume's "History," vol. ii., p. 496).

where he dwelleth in the winter, to serve the summer, if he may serve in the same town."

There can be no doubt that vagabondage and disorder were the chief evils of the time. In an Act of 1 Richard II. we are told that "villeins withdraw their services and customs from their lords by the comfort and procurement of others, their counsellors, maintainers, and abettors which have taken hire and profit of the said villeins and land-tenants."¹ Professor Thorold Rogers feels sure that this "refers to the company of poor priests whom Wicliffe had appointed, and who were the channel by which communications were kept up among the disaffected serfs."² There is more than sufficient evidence to show that the lower classes were seething with a spirit of dissatisfaction when the Peasant Revolt under Wat Tyler broke out in A.D. 1381.³ That the real cause of this revolt was the attempt of the lords, against the growing spirit of freedom (which was active not only in England but in France and Flanders), to enforce the old conditions of serfdom there can be no doubt. The object of the revolt was simply to abolish the conditions and incidents of villeinage.⁴ The demands of the peasants, it may be remembered, were four: (1) The total abolition of slavery for themselves and their children for ever; (2) the reduction of the rent of good land to 4d. an acre; (3) the full liberty of buying and selling, like other men, in all fairs and markets; (4) a general pardon for all past offences. I must not dwell upon either the incidents or the results of the revolt, but must pass on to point out how one or two other Acts of Parliament at the end of this fourteenth century throw further light on the condition of the people. In A.D. 1388 an Act was passed which by some is regarded as marking the first step in our present Poor Law; it is also interesting as containing the first

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. i., pp. 48, 49.

² "Economic Interpretation of History," p. 29.

³ See Trevelyan, "England in the Age of Wycliffe," chap. vi.

⁴ In the preamble of an Act of 1377 it is stated, "Complaint has been made by the lords of manors, as well men of Holy Church as others, that the villeins on their estates affirm them to be quite and utterly discharged of all manner of serfage, etc." (Trevelyan, p. 193).

recognition of the "impotent poor" as a class.¹ One reason for this Act was probably that people were being drawn from the rural districts into the towns for the sake of higher wages and greater comfort. The Act prohibits servants and labourers from wandering, whether in search of employment or for some other cause. It also states that "beggars impotent to serve shall abide in the cities and towns where they be dwelling; and if the people of these cities and towns will not, or may not, suffice to find them, that then the said beggars shall draw them to other towns within the hundred, rape, or wapentake, or to the towns where they were born." It should be noticed that side by side with this enactment again no provision is made for the sustenance or relief of these people: they are simply left to chance or casual charity. The only object of the Act is apparently to prevent them from wandering.² Three years later we have another Act which may have been partly designed to meet the inconveniences occasioned by the last; for in A.D. 1392 it was enacted that in every appropriation of the revenues of any parish church to some cathedral, or monastic, or other religious institution, "the diocesan shall ordain a convenient sum of money to be distributed yearly of the fruits and profits of the same, to the poor parishioners in aid of their living and sustenance for ever."³

Even before the arrival of the Black Death, as we have seen, emancipation from villeinage had made very considerable progress; but like every other social change, however excellent in itself, it was at least temporarily attended by various evils. So long as the serf remained a serf he was sure of, at least, bare sustenance from his master;⁴ when he became a free labourer he was dependent upon himself, and that in an age in which

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 55 *et seq.*

² Ratzinger apparently holds that during the fourteenth century in England the clergy and monastic institutions looked well after the needs of the poor; but in the fifteenth century he admits things in this respect changed for the worse. It must, however, be remembered that he holds a strong brief for the Church ("Armenpflege," pp. 426 *et seq.*).

³ 15 Richard II., cap. 6; see p. 34. Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁴ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 27. See also Meredith, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

there was no Poor Law to fall back upon. The man who has been practically a slave is by no means always at once ready to occupy and use wisely a position of freedom. He has to learn to use his freedom, which means to depend upon himself. It is facts like these which explain many of the social difficulties of the end of the Middle Ages. An Act passed early in the fifteenth century¹ reveals another difficulty of this period. Its object was to check the exodus from the country to the town, to stem the growing dearth of agricultural labourers. By this Act it was ordained "that no man or woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall put their son or daughter of whatsoever age to serve as apprentice to no craft nor other labour within any city or borough, unless he have land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at least."

In the reign of Henry VI. we have another attempt² to regulate wages by enacting a new scale, which shows a very considerable rise upon the wages prescribed some sixty years previously. Under Edward IV. we meet with a revision of the sumptuary laws of Edward III., which again indicates an increase in the national wealth.³ With the Wars of the Roses almost the last traces of feudalism passed away, and upon the close of these wars we see a rapid and practically continuously progressive development both of trade and of national wealth, though some of the old difficulties still exist, two of these being—first, the further conversion of arable land into pasture;⁴ and secondly, the increase of "vagabonds and beggars." The two evils, we can easily see, were probably not wholly independent of each other.

It must be conceded that during this period the influence of the Church upon the social welfare of the people was relatively less than during the various epochs we have previously con-

¹ 7 Henry IV., cap. 17 (Nicholls, p. 66).

² 23 Henry IV., cap. 12. From this Act a carpenter's wage had risen from 3d. to 5d. a day, a labourer's from 1d. to 3d., the wages of a woman from 1d. to 4d.

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 84 *et seq.*

⁴ By the time of Edward IV. the woollen trade had risen into great importance (Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 *et seq.*).

sidered. This was especially the case in the towns. Other influences, besides those we may term ecclesiastical (which are not always synonymous with religious), were growing in importance. The towns were more and more asserting their freedom against the overlordship of the great barons or against the rights of the great monasteries, under whose protection they had frequently grown. Towards the end of the Middle Ages we certainly witness what may be termed a growing "secularization" of both life and authority.¹ We see this in many directions, and it was due to various causes. The Church in every country could not fail to be to some extent represented in the eyes of the people by the Papacy, as well as to be influenced by the vicissitudes and conduct of the Papal Court. While in outward magnificence the Papacy during this period may have actually grown, its *moral* hold upon the people was rapidly becoming weaker. The spread of such doctrines as those of Wycliffe—*e.g.*, that "dominion was founded upon grace," had far more than a theological influence; their social and economic results were very considerable.² Then many of the chief offices of State, which had formerly been held exclusively by ecclesiastics, were now frequently filled by laymen. Such offices had been held by bishops and priests, not merely because of their superior education, but because it was considered that these were particularly bound to discharge their duties with the fear of God before their eyes.³ To understand the life, and especially the economic life, of the Middle Ages, we must remember that while ideals and principles were very lofty, actual practice, especially as time went on, fell immeasurably below these. Too often a claim to authority and respect founded upon a spiritual position became a mere pretext to clothe an absorbing interest in worldly dignities and earthly gain. Then, to some extent,

¹ See Cunningham, "Western Civilization," pp. 138 *et seq.*

² There is a brief but clear account of Wycliffe's teaching and its social effects in Dr. Workman's essay upon "The Influence of the Christian Church on the Social Development of the Middle Ages," in "Christ and Civilization," p. 326 *et seq.*

³ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 140, 141.

the influence of the mendicant orders had a far-reaching effect towards a separation—frequently false in theory and detrimental in practice—of the sacred from the secular.¹ Also during the fourteenth, and especially during the fifteenth century, the conduct of the religious houses seems to have deteriorated; there was a falling off, not only in the management of their property, but in the discharge of their responsibilities both towards their serfs and towards the poor generally.² At one time the monks had been the best agriculturists; they had also assisted in the development of commerce. But now “the Church had ceased to be a leader in the arts of practical life, while her inability to utilize privileges and possessions to the best advantage under changed conditions was fatal to her position as the dominating influence over secular life in all its aspects.”³

As an interesting example, not exactly of the dereliction of a positive duty, but of an increasing carelessness with regard to the social and economic welfare of the people on the part of the monasteries, I may cite the fact that these gradually ceased to pay the same attention to the repair of bridges and roads, of which in earlier times they had been extremely careful.⁴ The welfare of the people depends to a great extent upon trading facilities, which in turn depend upon means of communication. At one time the building of bridges and the making of roads, and the keeping of both in repair, were widely regarded as acts of piety. But in the fourteenth century we meet with various complaints, especially in reference to the monasteries, that both bridges and roads had been allowed to fall into disrepair.⁵ It was not, however, until A.D. 1555 that an Act was passed appointing road surveyors, and which “embodies the modern view of the nature of the obligations.”⁶

Yet another example of the growing secularization of relief is furnished by the way in which hospitals and other institutions in towns for the relief of the sick and poor passed more and

¹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 145 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴ See Jusserand, “English Wayfaring Life in the Fourteenth Century.”

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 64 *et seq.*

⁶ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

more under either lay or civic jurisdiction.¹ The various trade guilds made provision not only for their own indigent members, but in certain instances for other poor and afflicted persons. It may have been through their association for these purposes in the guilds that municipal rulers began as such—that is, as representing the citizens and no longer merely the guild—to take an active part in the administration of poor relief.² There are instances during the fifteenth century of charitable institutions being not only controlled by the municipalities, but of such institutions owning (at least in part) their foundation to these bodies. An interesting early example of municipal relief is furnished by Southampton where, in the middle of the fifteenth century, “the townys almys were settled on a plan,” and lists were kept of weekly payments, which seem to have furnished sufficient relief for about a hundred and fifty people.³

Upon the *fact* that, at any rate during the fifteenth century, the relief of the poor was slowly and very gradually falling into lay hands, there can, I think, be no doubt; though the change was very gradual, because by far the greater part of the relief given was still dispensed either by the clergy or by ecclesiastical institutions.⁴ Upon the various *causes* of this change there is room for at least some difference of opinion. It is easy to throw the chief share of the blame upon the Church, and to speak of the rapacity of prelates and monks, and of the mismanagement of ecclesiastical property. To a certain extent these charges are no doubt true.⁵ But other causes than these were at work, causes over which the Church had little or no control. Conditions both of life and trade were rapidly changing, and tasks for which the Church was at one time equal had to a great extent become beyond her power.⁶ There

¹ Even Ratzinger admits, “Obwohl in England¹ der Clerus die Bedürfnisse der Armen zu decken stets redlich bemüht war . . . bildeten sich doch auch wie in den übrigen Ländern schon einege Laienvereine” (“Armenpflege,” p. 430).

² Leonard, “English Poor Relief,” p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ Leonard, p. 17.

⁵ Ratzinger, again, admits this (“Armenpflege,” pp. 426, 429).

⁶ Cunningham, “Western Civilization,” p. 147. We must remember that, among other changes of thought, new ideas were growing in reference to the “theory” of charity.

have been parallels to these changes in other ages in other departments of life. One readily suggests itself. At one time the Church possessed almost a monopoly of the education of the people. I am not saying that when this was so the Church discharged her responsibility to the full; but she certainly did an immense amount of good work, for which she has not always received the credit. But with changed conditions this task became beyond the powers of voluntary enterprise. The State was compelled to step in and to take a very large share of the burden upon her shoulders. So it was with the municipal and national organization of relief, also with regard to the repression of mendicity, and with measures for the regulation of labour and wages. All these matters had to do with the poor and with poverty, and in regard to them the State began to take a larger and larger share.

Then there can be no doubt that both the medieval theory and medieval practice of relief, when tested by actual results, were extremely imperfect. As we have frequently seen, far too little was thought of the character and actual needs of the recipients, and also of the probable results of the charity bestowed. Almsgiving was regarded as a duty; but neither the organization of charity, nor the economic or moral results of charity, were carefully studied. There were districts in which there might be two or three rich monastic houses; in these districts far more than enough charity might be given, while in other districts the means for relief might be very small. In some districts relief might be had for the asking, in others hardly any relief could be obtained. There was no co-ordination of charity; and apparently neither individuals nor institutions took the trouble to ascertain what their neighbours were giving. They gave, and when they had given they imagined that their duty was done. If anyone wishes to learn how charity should not be given, and of the evils attendant upon unwise giving, they will find in the history of the later Middle Ages more than sufficient lessons upon both.

The Eve of the Reformation.

We are accustomed to regard the Reformation as almost wholly a religious, or rather, an ecclesiastical, movement, produced entirely by what may be termed religious causes, and having certain ecclesiastical results—*e.g.*, the disruption of the Western Church. Such a view is very far from being the whole truth. Actually many of the causes of the Reformation—indeed, some of the most powerful among these—were not religious at all, and can only very indirectly be termed ecclesiastical; they were only ecclesiastical because they were connected with the financial arrangements of the Church.¹ Among the secular causes of the Reformation was the growth of both the idea and the fact of nationality which arose before or about this period in more than one European country.² This growth was accompanied by a diminution in relative importance of many of the great cities.³ Another cause of the Reformation was a very widespread condition of economic, and so of social, distress, though this cause operated far more powerfully on the Continent than it did in England,⁴ where, if the condition of the poorer classes during the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century was evil, it seems to have been far less evil than in Germany or Italy, or even in France.

We shall find that during the reign of Henry VIII. and his successors Act after Act was passed with the view of suppressing the mendicancy and vagabondage with which England (as other countries) at this period was rife. The undoubted enormous increase of this evil which took place at this time is sometimes attributed to the suppression of the religious houses, and to the consequent cutting off of the charities which these had disbursed. This may have increased the distress, but it cannot be regarded as its chief cause; for the increase of mendicancy took place in

¹ Upon the whole subject of Papal exactions see "Cambridge Modern History," vol. i., pp. 665 *et seq.*

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 157 *et seq.* ³ Meredith, *op. cit.*, pp. 122 *et seq.*

⁴ Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, p. 431: "Das Englische Volk lebte vielmehr in Wohlstand."

countries where the religious houses continued, also it began long before their suppression.

The real cause was the rapid changes which were taking place in both the structure and conditions of society. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there had been widespread and almost constant warfare. These wars had found employment (as soldiers) for an immense number of men. Now that the wars were largely over we find not only widespread devastation and injury to agriculture and trade,¹ but also bands of men roaming over England and France and other countries without work, and many of them without either training or desire for work.² Then the conditions of trade were rapidly changing. The results of the discovery of the New World were beginning to be felt; capitalism, one of the chief bases of modern commerce, was growing;³ the old trade guild system was breaking up; trade was leaving many of the towns, which had been its chief centres, for the country;⁴ also in England the custom of pasture, in place of arable, farming was rapidly extending.⁵ Then, as I have already noticed, the estates belonging to various ecclesiastical owners and corporations were not so well managed as formerly. This last may to some degree have been due to carelessness; it was also due to the growing exactions of the Papal Court, which became a more and more severe drain upon their resources, and so upon the life of the people whom they had supported either by work or by alms. There can be no doubt that these exactions—which were surely a financial as much as an ecclesiastical factor—were among the chief causes of the Reformation. Immense sums of money were constantly going out of the country to provide for the wars, the extravagances, and the luxuries of the Papal Court,⁶ also for

¹ "Cambridge Modern History," p. 501.

² The majority of these men would be paid, professional soldiers, who would be discharged when a war was over; in time of peace they were among the unemployed.

³ Cunningham, "Western Civilization," pp. 163 *et seq.*

⁴ Innes, "England's Industrial Development," p. 125.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 137 *et seq.*

⁶ Upon the whole subject see the "Cambridge Modern History," vol. i., pp. 665 *et seq.*

the ever-increasing number of Papal officials and agents, who swallowed up the greater part of it before it reached its destination.¹

It may, of course, be argued that the discovery of the New World and the consequent growth of trade should have improved the financial condition of the people. Undoubtedly it did so ultimately, as did the introduction of machinery two hundred years later ; but both changes, as every other revolution in trade conditions, involved a period of temporary distress. People have to adjust themselves to new conditions, and the time of transition generally means a considerable amount of suffering.

I have entered somewhat fully into the conditions of this period because some knowledge of them is essential if we would understand the great changes which took place in the methods of dealing with the poor during the actual course of the Reformation, which must form the subject of the next chapter. It was not that the responsibility of supplying the needs of the poor passed entirely out of the hands of the Church into those of the State, though undoubtedly the maintenance of the poor, or rather of paupers—those incapable of supporting themselves—became gradually a civic rather than an ecclesiastical charge. The transition was a gradual one : it proceeded step by step. The men who framed the new legislation laboured under serious disadvantages, and they made many mistakes. These mistakes were due to various causes, some of which were beyond their control. They were ignorant of the laws upon which social welfare was based, and they sometimes showed themselves strangely ignorant of human nature, and especially of those rules and principles upon which character must be built up. They made law after law, and they tried method after method of dealing with both the deserving and the undeserving—with those who could not, and those who would not, try to maintain themselves in an honest calling.

¹ "The accounts of the Papal agent for first-fruits in Hungary for the year 1320 show that of 1,913 florins collected only 732 reached the Papal treasury" (*ibid.*, p. 667).

VII.

THE REFORMATION: LUTHER AND CALVIN.

IN the last chapter I pointed out that even before the Reformation there had arisen a growing secularization of the means taken for relieving the poor. First civic, and then national, authorities had already begun to assume a responsibility towards those in need, a responsibility which during earlier periods had been left entirely to the Church.¹ At this point, therefore, it will be necessary for me to remind my readers that while I shall still have in view the religious aspect of the subject, the part taken by the State—*i.e.*, the civil authority—in dealing with the poor must now occupy a larger share of our attention than it has hitherto done.

With the coming of the Reformation the term “the Church” must in these chapters to some extent change its meaning. So far, at any rate since the days of Gregory the Great, it has meant the undivided Church of Western Christendom, of which the Pope was the recognized earthly head. From this point onwards it may mean either organized Western Christianity—*i.e.*, the sum total of the various parts or fragments into which the Catholic Church of the West broke up—or it may mean what we term the English Church. Under the first interpretation it would, of course, include the work of the great Continental reformers.

¹ Certainly since the Reformation the influence of the Church on the relief of the poor has been more indirect than it was previously; but if indirect, it has also been very real. Current conceptions of Christian duty have affected not only the clergy, but the laity—*e.g.*, statesmen who have framed the laws and Boards of Guardians who have administered them. The revival of interest in the doctrine of the Incarnation during recent years has had an immense influence upon the treatment of the poor.

Once again, let me insist that the period which we term the Reformation was marked not only by doctrinal and ecclesiastical, but also by immense social, changes. The two sets of changes proceeded side by side; they were not independent, yet we must be extremely cautious in speaking of any particular change in either category as being either the cause or effect of a change in the other.¹ What I would maintain is, that quite apart from a consideration of the doctrinal and ecclesiastical changes which took part, the immense alterations which occurred in social conditions during this period demand the most careful attention of those who are interested in the history of the welfare of the people, and who would learn valuable lessons from a study of that history.²

But especially during the second half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century a rapid change was taking place in another, and an extremely important, sphere of activity—that of thought. This affected the conceptions both of religion and of everyday conduct; it affected the whole conception of life and duty. This change of thought was chiefly due to enlarged knowledge. It manifested itself in a growth of the critical spirit, also of the scientific spirit, and in a much more free exercise of the reason; it resulted in a harvest of individualistic tendencies and an ever-growing demand for liberty. We have no right to assume, as is frequently the case, that in these various movements the Reformers invariably stood on the one side, and those who failed to follow them on the other. Very frequently the actual conduct of the Reformers was in direct contradiction to the principles they professed; and even so far as freedom of thought is concerned, men like Erasmus and More were far in advance of men like Calvin and Knox.³

¹ Professor Pollard in the "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ii., p. 175: "The assertion that there was no connection between the Reformation and the Peasants' Revolt is as far from the truth as the statement that the one produced the other."

² The "economic" changes which took place in Western Europe from the middle of the fifteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century can hardly be exaggerated. On the whole subject see chap. xv. of the "Cambridge Modern History," vol. i. (by Dr. Cunningham).

³ Much that is most interesting on this subject will be found in the following chapters of Beard's "Hibbert Lectures": (iv.) "The Principles

Another question arises in connection with the effect of the Reformation, or rather in connection with the effect of its individualistic tendencies, upon the welfare of the poor. To some extent the Reformation synchronizes with the rise of capitalism; that is, with the growing power of capitalism.¹ Side by side with this, and not independent of it, we see the effect of individualistic conceptions in the growth of competition in trade. The facts are these: The countries which largely accepted the principles of the Reformation became, on the whole, the chief commercial countries of Europe, those in which trade rapidly increased; indeed, one might go a step farther, and say that in these countries the chief commercial centres became the great strongholds of advanced Reformation, or Puritan, principles. In these countries, and especially in these commercial centres, we find competition in trade—often with disastrous effects upon the poor—becoming more and more accentuated. I simply place these facts before my readers, leaving them to see connections and draw conclusions for themselves.²

The Reformation had many indirect results, among these the most important for our present purpose was that it revolutionized the conception of charity. The policy of the Reformers set very strongly against indiscriminate charity, which had become nothing less than a curse to society during the later Middle Ages. For instance, Luther laid down the two following principles: First, "Begging is to be rigidly prohibited; all who are not old or weak shall work. No beggars shall be permitted to stay who do not belong to the parish." On the second principle it seems as if he would relieve the

of the Reformation"; (v.) "The Reformation in Relation to Reason and Liberty"; (x.) "The Growth of the Critical Spirit"; (xi.) "The Development of Philosophical Method and Scientific Investigation." See also chap. xix. of vol. ii. of the "Cambridge Modern History."

¹ See chap. ii., book v., "The Intervention of Capital," in Cunningham's "Western Civilization."

² The whole subject of the connection between individualism in religion and in commerce is one which deserves more study than it has yet received. Studied historically, the subject might prove enlightening and instructive.

Church entirely of its responsibilities to the poor, for he says : " Each town should provide for its own poor people . . . poor householders who have honourably laboured at their craft or in agriculture ought to be given loans from the public chest ; and this aid shall be given to them without return, if they are unable to restore it." ¹

History is full of examples showing how easily the pendulum swings from one extreme to the other. It seems to have been so in regard to almsgiving during the Reformation. Instead of lavishness, we find absolute niggardliness ; instead of too much charity, we find callousness towards the actual needs of the poor. In the celebrated Sermon of the Plough, preached by Bishop Latimer at St. Paul's in 1548, we read : " In times past men were full of pity and compassion, but now there is no pity ; for in London their brother shall die in the streets for cold ; he shall lie sick at the door between stock and stock . . . and perish there for hunger. In times past . . . when any man died they would bequeath great sums of money toward the relief of the poor . . . now charity is waxen cold, none helpeth the poor." ² Again, in a letter to Cecil, Bishop Ridley writes : " I must be a suitor unto you in our good Master Christ's cause ; I beseech you be good to Him. The matter is, sir, alas ! He hath lain too long abroad in the streets of London, both hungry, naked, and cold." ³

But before I enter upon the effects which the Reformation had upon the treatment of the poor in England, I would point out two most valuable lessons which we may learn from the two greatest Continental Reformers : The first from the *work* of Luther, which should be of the nature of an extremely strong warning ; the second from the *teaching* of Calvin, which is at present having, and I trust may continue to have, a far-reaching influence for good. ⁴

¹ " Christ and Civilization," p. 367.

² Quoted in Leonard's " English Poor Relief," p. 29, note.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴ I refer, of course, to the " social principles" and " social teaching" of the Bible.

I showed in the last chapter that when the Reformation dawned there was in various parts of Europe, and arising from many different causes, a very considerable amount of distress ; among the peasants of Germany this distress was particularly acute.¹ For many years there had existed a condition of growing discontent, which finally came to a head and broke out in the Peasants' War of 1524-25. What I would now consider is the part which Luther took in regard to this revolt. I cannot here enter at length into the history or the causes of this rebellion ; briefly, it was due to poverty, which was the result of heavy burdens imposed by feudal services, pernicious game laws, growing taxation, and exactions demanded by the ecclesiastical courts. Probably the nobles were themselves suffering severely from the changes in economic conditions, and therefore they tried to shift the burden from their own shoulders on to those of the poorest of the people, a device which has been attempted at various times.²

Possibly, Luther's own teaching, in which he had denounced not only the exactions of the Papacy, but also merchants and lawyers as robbers, had helped to fan the flames.³ We must remember that in the earliest demands of the peasants there was nothing revolutionary ; on the contrary, they were reasonable in themselves, and were couched in moderate language.⁴ But as the movement grew, its objects undoubtedly widened ; its language became more passionate, and its tone more and more extreme. At first, also, there was among many of the leaders a distinctly religious spirit, one of which the nature was quite excellent. It must, however, be conceded that though, especially at first, the great majority of those taking part were peasants with very genuine wrongs, another element was gradually absorbed into the movement. I refer to that section of the

¹ For a brief account of these see "Christ and Civilization," pp. 340 *et seq.*

² It is well known that the burden of increased taxation generally falls ultimately upon the very poor.

³ See T. M. Lindsay, "Luther and the German Revolution," p. 170.

⁴ "They were expressed in religious phraseology, and supported by arguments drawn from the Scriptures" ("Christ and Civilization," p. 341).

population which includes a number of the criminal classes, and is always ready to participate in disorder.¹ Though the movement was essentially an agrarian one, it did to some extent affect the towns. These were generally divided in their sympathies. Usually the mass of the people held with the peasants, while the richer classes, represented by the Council and the leading citizens, were against these.² The movement, as we know, was ultimately crushed by the ruling powers. It was crushed with the most heartless ferocity,³ and largely by the help of foreign mercenaries. It ended in what can only be termed a massacre, in which not less than 100,000 of the peasants fell by the sword.⁴

Luther's attitude towards the movement, and the permanent effects of this attitude upon religion in Germany, are extremely instructive. In fact, I know of few episodes in the whole course of history from which a clearer and more instructive warning may be learnt. This is my chief reason for bringing the episode before my readers.

At first Luther's sympathies were undoubtedly with the peasants.⁵ Before the revolt broke out he had inveighed in no measured terms against the misgovernment of the Princes and ecclesiastical rulers, also against the growing luxuriousness of the wealthy.⁶ Thus, to a certain extent, if unintentionally, he was certainly a contributory cause of the outbreak. When this actually occurred, Luther adopted at first what appeared to be a more or less neutral position. On the one hand, he expressed not only sympathy with, but actually a measure of approval of, the demands made by the peasants; on the other hand, he warned these that if they resorted to violence the movement must end in disaster.

Luther, of course, was in an extremely difficult position. He knew at heart that the original demands of the peasants were just, that they were actually asking no more than the right to live.

¹ "Cambridge Modern History," p. 182.

² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵ "He had sympathy with the demands of the 'Twelve Articles'" (T. M. Lindsay, "Luther," p. 183).

⁶ *E.g.*, in his "Appeal to the Nobility of the German Nation."

But he could not (so he judged) do without the help both of the Princes and also of the well-to-do and official classes, among whom his theological opinions had chiefly spread.¹ But when, at this juncture, Luther was content to impart what has been termed "spiritual" advice to the starving peasants, he was committing an error which many a well-intentioned religious leader has committed since then. When men are hungry, they are not in a mental condition to appreciate, much less to be content with, such advice. Thought is doubtless spiritual, but you cannot think without a brain, which is a physical organ, and consequently demands regular physical nourishment.

Luther, however, did not long remain in a neutral position. In April or May of 1525 he issued the vehement (and indeed infamous) tract, "Against the Murderous Thieving Hordes of Peasants," in which he called upon the Princes to crush the revolt. I know that when the immediate circumstances—*e.g.*, the fiery proclamations of Münzer and the campaign of destruction which followed these in Thuringia and the Harz²—are remembered, something may be said for Luther; but that others, under the severe pressure of actual want, had resorted to violence was no justification for the language which Luther used, not in speech, which may be uttered in the heat of the moment, but in writing, which was printed and published. The following extract from Luther's pamphlet will show its nature and its spirit: "In the case of an insurgent, every man is both judge and executioner. Therefore, whoever can should knock down, strangle, and stab such, publicly and privately, and think nothing so venomous, pernicious, and devilish, as an insurgent. . . . Such wonderful times are these that a Prince can merit heaven better with bloodshed than another with prayer."³

The evil results of Luther's action at that time have never passed away; they actually affect religious life in Germany at the present day. This, as I have already said, is my reason for

¹ "Cambridge Modern History," p. 178.

² Lindsay, "Luther and the German Reformation," pp. 184 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

dwelling upon the subject. The immediate results of Luther's policy were : First, the peasants were alienated from Protestantism ; some relapsed back into Roman Catholicism, but the majority drifted into unbelief.¹ Secondly, the Lutheran movement ceased to be in any sense national ; it depended henceforth for its very existence upon the support of political powers. Melancthon was compelled to admit "that the decrees of the Lutheran Church were merely platonic conclusions without the support of the princes."²

Luther's conduct—indeed, his policy—was not inspired by any high principle or lofty ideal. It was governed by considerations of interest ; it was based upon what he believed to be the necessities of the moment ; it was purely utilitarian, and that not in the highest, but rather in the lowest, sense of the word.³ Its permanent results have been : First, that neither Lutheranism as a system of religion, nor the Lutheran Church as its expression, has ever been in a true sense either the religion or the Church of the German *people*. Lutheranism has been a State religion, protected by the State, and consequently under the control or overlordship of the State.⁴ Its clergy, as a body, have never been able to be quite independent witnesses for God, and truth, and righteousness. Secondly, the Lutheran Church has never, as a Church, been able to identify itself with either the principles or the work of Christian social reform. Individual leaders, especially during the last two generations, have doubtless championed the rights of the poor, but as a Church it cannot be said to have stood for those rights. It has been the Church of the rulers rather than the Church of the subjects. Thirdly, the anti-Christian character of almost all forms of German Socialism has been an abiding result of Luther's unhappy policy.⁵ Those who have been on the side of social progress have too often felt

¹ "Christ and Civilization," p. 344.

² "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ii., p. 194.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁴ "Luther's deep distrust of 'the common man' . . . prevented him from believing in a democratic Church, and led him to bind his reformation in the fetters of a secular control to the extent of regarding the secular Government as having a quasi-episcopal function" (Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 189.)

⁵ "Christ and Civilization," p. 344.

that they must look elsewhere for sympathy and practical help. How could they look for assistance to a Church whose interests are so palpably bound up with the interests of those who have, and whose chief aim is too often simply to retain at once their position and possessions?

More than once, as we shall see in the course of subsequent chapters, the Church of England has, since the Reformation, succumbed to the same temptation—to be guided by a policy of present interest; and more than once she has suffered severely from this choice. The history of the English Church, especially during the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, furnishes only too many examples, both of isolated actions and courses of policy by which she lost, as she deserved to lose, the affection of the poorer classes. The danger of the Church still making mistakes in this direction has not entirely passed; hence it is well to have our memories refreshed upon the part played by Luther during the Peasants' War and upon the disastrous results of his conduct.

From Luther I turn to Calvin, whom we do not as a rule regard as primarily a social reformer, though in this, more than in any other sphere of activity, I think Calvin's greatness was revealed. I am not going either to enter into Calvin's interesting history, or to deal with his theological opinions. I am only concerned with him here in connection with the great principle he laid down (and which he zealously tried to put into practice) in regard to the true method of dealing with the social problem, and, as part of this, as to the best way of helping the poor.

To understand Calvin we must remember that he was trained as a lawyer; he was primarily a great jurist, and also a great moralist. At the same time he was a great "humanist." His earliest work was a commentary on the "De Clementia" of Cicero. In this commentary Calvin's character is revealed. He is a man "with a passion for conduct, moral, veracious, strenuous."¹ To

¹ "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ii., p. 352. (The chapter on Calvin is by the late Dr. A. M. Fairbairn.)

him "to have clemency is true humanity," and Calvin applies this doctrine socially. Man pitiful to men will be sensible of their rights and of his own duties. It has been said of Calvin, probably in view of his cast-iron system of theology, that "he never changed"; but this is not to say that he did not develop.¹ His strong conviction that religion must (in the sense of "inevitably") be translated into morality or conduct may have made him harsh, and in one well-known instance it made him positively cruel.² Throughout his career he was governed by this conviction. To most people, as I have already said, Calvin is pre-eminently the founder of a theological system (which is not the fact); actually he is much rather a great statesman, a great educationist, and the reformer of the morals of Geneva. These are Calvin's true titles to greatness. The key to his conduct is to remember that he "conceives the Gospel as a new law which ought to be embodied in a new life, individual and social."³ Of course, to understand Calvin's work we must have some knowledge of the political, social, and moral condition of Geneva when Calvin arrived there for the first time.⁴ I cannot, however, stay to describe these here further than to say that the moral conditions were very much what we knew to have been those of a city under ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the middle of the sixteenth century. There are those who are apt to assume that with the advent or acceptance of Protestantism moral conditions would necessarily improve. But Fairbairn admits that, though at least two months before Calvin's arrival Geneva had sworn to live according to the holy Evangelical Law and Word of God,⁵ it had not actually become any more moral in character. It had simply "changed its mind" in religion.⁶ What Calvin set himself to organize was not simply a city which should also be a Church—which was the old Geneva idea—but a Church which should be efficaciously moral.

¹ Dr. Fairbairn says: "Few men may have changed less; but few also have developed more."

² I refer, of course, to the death of Servetus.

³ "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ii., p. 357.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., pp. 358 *et seq.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 363.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

Now I come to the special point in which Calvin demands our attention in connection with our present subject. Briefly, Calvin made the Bible at once the foundation, the textbook, and the inspiration of his whole social system. Its teaching was not simply the best, but the only true guide to social reform. The way he approached the subject was thus : The Bible contains the revealed will of God ; therefore a State, or a social polity, should be founded upon the teaching of Scripture. A theocracy meant nothing more or less than a State founded and built up upon this teaching ; it meant "the application of the truths of the Bible to civic and political life." Of course, "in claiming that the Bible was a textbook of sociology¹ as well as of religion Calvin took up a position which was destined to produce revolutionary ideas in the future."² The establishment of this theocracy was to be the joint work of Church and State. The State so constituted and established possessed supreme power over the individual, and the individual had no rights against the State. This naturally followed, from the obvious fact that there could be no appeal against the law of God. The difficulty lay in the application of these principles. One point upon which Calvin insisted was that the individual is bound to sacrifice his own interests for the interests of the community. On the other hand, Calvin taught that the State made itself responsible for his well-being. As an application of this Calvin held that the State must find useful employment for every man that could work. As a practical application of this particular conviction Calvin introduced new industries into Geneva.³

The principle enunciated by Calvin, that the Bible must be the supreme rule in every department of Church and State, is in agreement with the whole spirit of the Reformation—in fact, it

¹ Unfortunately, the word "sociology" is used to-day with very different meaning. See the essay "On the Origin and Use of the Word Sociology" in "Sociological Papers," 1904 (Macmillan and Co.). Here the word is tantamount to "the science of the constitution of society."

² The position is really at the basis of all forms of so-called "*Christian Socialism*."

³ "Christ and Civilization," pp. 349 *et seq.*

is simply an application of its most comprehensive doctrine—the supremacy of Holy Scripture.¹ But at once the question arises : How is it to be worked out? Undoubtedly Geneva offered a particularly favourable field for doing this, because by tradition at Geneva there had always been an exceptional unity of Church and State ;² also from the small size of its territory, and the limited number of its inhabitants, Geneva offered a manageable field for a social experiment. That a considerable measure of success did attend Calvin's efforts cannot be denied.

The principle which Calvin enunciated has had an influence far beyond his own age. It has, if under different forms, been strongly revived during the last few years, and its influence in several directions is yet growing. The difficulty, as in the case of every comprehensive principle, lies in its application to actual needs and circumstances. If we admit that the "social" teaching of Christ is the heart and essence of the "social" teaching of Holy Scripture, and if we say that the teaching, both of Christ and of Holy Scripture, must be spiritually interpreted, then we may claim that the supremacy of the social teaching of Holy Scripture is the principle for which all the Christian Societies and Unions for Social Service, which are so active at the present time, are contending.

But we may go a step farther than this in the direction of Calvin's teaching, and say that actually in Holy Scripture (*e.g.*, in the teaching of Christ, and in the great principles enunciated by the Old Testament Prophets), the laws of social welfare are for all time enunciated ; and further, that these laws are as irrefragable, and their issues as inevitable, as are such scientific laws as those which govern the motions of bodies, as the laws of light, or heat, or electricity. We must, however, be extremely careful in our application of this faith or conviction. We must remember that we are dealing with substances and forces besides which all other substances and forces are extremely

¹ To Calvin the supremacy and authority of Holy Scripture was based upon the concurrent witness of the Holy Spirit in the written word and in the believer's soul. See his "Institutio," book i., chap. vii.

² "Cambridge Modern History," vol. ii., pp. 358 *et seq.*

simple. Suppose we look upon the social course which under any particular set of circumstances should be pursued as a problem to be solved, we must remember that the number of "variants" in the problem is extremely great; also that both our knowledge of the nature of these variants (which are composed of human nature), and also our knowledge of the forces under the influence of which these variants act, is even yet extremely limited.¹

The danger to a nature like Calvin's, which had been accentuated by his legal training, was to regard the whole Bible as a legal code, every part of which was of equal authority. The critical-historical spirit by which we seek to distinguish what is essential to the teaching, from what is merely accidental to the age, of a Biblical writer had not been as fully developed in Calvin's time as it has in our own. At the same time we cannot exaggerate the truth or value of the great social principles (the principles of social righteousness) which underlie the teaching of the Hebrew Prophets. This is very far from saying that we can regard the legalistic code of Judaism as a standard of conduct for the present time. It is in noticing the chasm which separates essentials from accidentals that we see that, while "the spirit" of the social teaching of the Bible "giveth life," a rigid application of "the letter" of that teaching may actually be productive of destruction.

Those who accepted the doctrines of the Reformation could no longer accept the medieval "theory of charity," which we have seen had been the growth of several centuries. The chief motive from which the greater part of the charity of the Middle Ages had been bestowed no longer existed for the Reformers.

¹ This may not be the place to enter into a present controversy of very considerable importance, but in the present reaction against a so-called "mechanical theory of the universe" there is at least a danger of the pendulum of thought swinging too far in the opposite direction. A "spiritual" interpretation of the universe, to use a current and popular phrase, is not necessarily a conception of the universe from which very definite fixed laws are necessarily excluded. Probably, however, these laws may not be so simple or so easy to state as was at one time supposed.

The doctrines of penance and of good works were no longer accepted by them. The consideration of personal reward or advantage to the giver of charity, either here or hereafter, could not now enter. No one who believed in the teaching of the Reformers could regard the bestowal of charity or the establishment of a hospital as a means for procuring a mitigation of the sufferings of purgatory. When people now give charity they must do so from purely altruistic motives. They must think of the needs and sufferings of the poor and of their duty to these ; they must not consider any advantage which, by giving, they themselves may reap.

But while it may be a comparatively easy thing to take away a certain motive, it is often an extremely difficult thing to put another motive of equal strength in its place. This was very practically proved during the period of the Reformation. As I have already shown, a very serious check was given to the flow of charity, and undoubtedly, at least for a time, this was the cause of very real suffering. Also, unfortunately, this happened during a season of exceptional distress among the poor, quite apart from any causes connected with the Reformation. It is during such seasons that charity, if wisely given, is most useful. But at the time of which we are speaking the chief source of charity of every kind was suddenly cut off. In England neither alms nor food could any longer be obtained at the monastery gate ; the wayfarer could no longer find shelter in the *hospitium* ; the sick were no longer tended and cared for in the monastic infirmary, because the monastery itself had ceased to exist. Not only had the monastery gone, but its possessions, part of which at least were the patrimony of the poor, had also gone. In a few instances, but very few, a portion of these possessions had been saved for purposes directly or indirectly connected with the poor ; but in the vast majority of instances both monastic lands and monastic revenues had been entirely alienated from every charitable purpose.

VIII.

THE REIGNS OF THE TUDOR SOVEREIGNS: HENRY VIII. TO ELIZABETH.

IN this chapter I shall consider the means which were taken in England during the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Philip and Mary, and Elizabeth, to deal with the problem of the poor—a problem of exceptional difficulty during this period, partly owing to new economic conditions (to which I have already drawn attention¹), and partly through the suppression of the monasteries and other religious institutions.² It was a time when there was at least an unusual amount of distress, and during which sources of help to which the poor had long been accustomed to look for relief were suddenly cut off.

In A.D. 1515 an Act of Parliament³ was passed, “concerning pulling down of towns,” which states “that great inconveniences are occasioned by the pulling down and destruction of houses and towns, and laying to pasture lands which have been usually occupied in tillage.” It further states that owing to this many people have been thrown into idleness, and it orders that all “towns, villages, hamlets, and other habitations so decayed, shall be re-edified within one year,” and that “tillage lands turned to pasturage shall be restored again to tillage.” Nineteen years later (in A.D. 1534) another Act⁴ was passed, the preamble to which is extremely informing. In this we are told that divers of the

¹ See pp. 77 *et seq.* and 83.

² “Cambridge Modern History,” pp. 467 *et seq.*

³ Actually there were two Acts: 6 Henry VIII., cap. 5, and 7 Henry VIII., cap. 1. See Nicholls’ “History of the Poor Law,” vol. i., p. 111.

⁴ 25 Henry VIII., cap. 13. Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

King's subjects "to whom God of His goodness hath disposed great plenty of moveable substance"—a reference to the growth of capitalism—have "invented ways and means" to gather into a few hands "great multitude of farms," putting the same to pasturage; in consequence the prices of provisions have so risen that "a marvellous multitude of the people of this realm be not able to provide meat, drink, and clothes necessary for themselves, their wives, and children, but be so discouraged with misery and poverty that they fall daily to theft, robbery, and other inconvenience, or pitifully die for hunger and cold."

By an Act passed in 1531¹ it is enjoined that a search be made for "all aged poor and impotent persons which live by alms and charity"; these are to have a licence to beg within certain defined limits. By the same Act if any person, "being whole and mighty in body and able to labour," be found begging, he is to be severely punished, and then "to be repaired to where he was born, or last dwelt for three years, and there labour for his living without begging so long as he is able so to do"; also by this Act any person found relieving "beggars being strong and able to work" is to be heavily fined. This Act naturally failed to accomplish its purpose, because it made no provision for sustaining the weak, and it did not help the strong to find employment. Five years later, in the year of the suppression of the smaller monastic houses,² an amending Act³ was passed, by which the chief officers of cities, towns, and parishes are ordered to relieve poor people so that they need not "go openly in begging," and also to "set and keep to continual labour sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars." For every month in which these regulations are not observed, a fine of twenty shillings is imposed upon the parish. The Act also states how the necessary funds are to be raised—*i.e.*, to help the impotent and to provide work for the able. The mayors and other chief officers in towns, and the churchwardens or two others of every parish, are

¹ 22 Henry VIII., cap. 10. Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

² In A.D. 1536.

³ 27 Henry VIII., cap. 25. Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

to procure "voluntary alms of the good Christian people within the same, with boxes, every Sunday and holiday, or otherwise among themselves." Also, "every parson, vicar, and curate is to exhort people to extend their charitable contributions . . . towards these objects." This same Act also makes another extremely interesting provision—viz., "that no person shall make any common or open dole, nor shall give any money in alms, otherwise than to the common boxes and common gatherings."¹ If anyone be found doing this, he is to be heavily fined. The Act even goes farther, and enjoins "bodies politic and corporate that are bound to give or distribute any money, bread, victuals, or other sustentation to poor people," to give the same into the "common boxes." Two reasons for this suggest themselves—first, that otherwise the collections would prove to be insufficient for the poor; secondly, that the Government was determined, if possible, to cut off the supplies which encouraged mendicancy.² Yet another provision of this Act deserves notice; by its fourth section authority is given to take up all children between the ages of five and thirteen who are begging or in idleness, and appoint them to "masters in husbandry or other crafts to be taught."

It will be seen that in this Act we have at least the foundations laid of many of the provisions of our present Poor Law; and from it we can conclude that the condition of the poor was a source of care both to the King and Parliament. Before leaving this Act two points should be carefully noticed: First, that as yet there was no *compulsory* assessment for the poor; practically all the funds needed for administration of the law were to be contributed voluntarily, "but parsons, vicars, and curates, when preaching, hearing confessions, or making wills, were to exhort people to be liberal." Secondly (as I have already noticed), that since the Act must have at least been drawn up, if not actually passed, before even the small monasteries were suppressed, we are driven to the conclusion that these and other religious

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

² Those who, in the interests of both the nation and the poor, wished to suppress mendicancy had, as the Italian Government has to-day, to fight against a national habit which had become a tradition.

institutions were already to a great extent failing to provide for the needs of the poor.

Having now shown what the central Government, with the help of the clergy, attempted to do for the whole kingdom during the reign of Henry VIII., I would indicate very briefly what was being done by the municipal authorities, also by the help of the clergy, during the same period. In the early part of the sixteenth century municipal rulers were much more independent than they are to-day. For instance, "they could impose taxes without the authority of Parliament";¹ they could also make their own regulations as to the manner of dealing with their own poor. "Each town was a law unto itself." If we study side by side municipal regulations and Acts of Parliament, we can see that frequently the Acts embodied and made general for the whole country regulations which in certain municipal areas were evidently deemed to have been proved useful. In London, between 1514 and 1524, we have a series of regulations forbidding vagrants to beg, and forbidding the citizens to give to unlicensed beggars.² This last injunction may well have been the source of the similar injunction in the Act of 1535-36. In 1533 it was found that the alms of the charitable in London were insufficient to provide for those having a licence to beg; consequently persons were chosen to gather "the devotions of parishioners for the poor folk weekly" (we presume in church), "and to distribute them to the poor folk at the church doors."³ Naturally the dissolution of the monasteries largely increased the difficulty of poor relief in London; consequently the citizens petitioned the King that certain of the old hospitals might be retained for the purposes for which they had originally been founded, or that they might be devoted to purposes connected with the amelioration of the lot of the needy. Four of these were saved, and to a certain extent re-endowed—namely, St. Thomas's, St. Bartholomew's, Christ's Hospital, and Bethlehem Hospital; to these must be

¹ Leonard, "English Poor Relief," p. 23.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

added Bridewell,¹ though that was devoted to a different purpose—a workhouse and a house of correction for the able-bodied. The history of the methods adopted in London during this period to solve the problem of poverty is full of interest. We witness the first beginnings of a serious attempt to discriminate between various classes whose needs were due to different causes—*i.e.*, the sick were treated at St. Thomas's and St. Bartholomew's, the children at Christ's Hospital, the lunatics at Bethlehem, and the able-bodied at Bridewell. We see the increasing difficulty of providing sufficient funds now that the self-regarding factor in giving charity was being undermined; we notice the first traces of a compulsory assessment;² we also see the danger—of which there have been several examples in our own time—of people being attracted to the Metropolis because of funds being there available for relief.

Ridley became Bishop of London in 1550, and for three years he worked hard on behalf of the poor of his diocese. It was largely owing to his efforts and to those of the contemporary Lord Mayors that St. Thomas's, St. Bartholomew's, and Christ's Hospitals were re-established and their endowments increased. But Ridley was not content to help the sick and the children: he wished, if possible, to clear the streets of beggars. With this object he desired to obtain a place where they might be taught and compelled to work. In pursuance of this purpose he addressed a letter to Cecil, in which he writes: "I must be a suitor to you in our good Master Christ's cause; I beseech you be good to Him. The matter is, Sir, alas! He hath lain too long abroad (as you do know) without lodging in the streets of London, both hungry, naked and cold. . . . Sir, there is a wide, large, empty house of the King's Majesty's called Bridewell, that would wonderfully well serve to lodge Christ in, if

¹ Originally a royal palace.

² "This is probably the first time a compulsory tax was levied for the relief of the poor. The assessment is ordered by the London Common Council a quarter of a century before Parliament had given authority for the making of assessments for this object" (Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 29). [This is a clear instance of a municipal regulation being afterwards adopted in an Act of Parliament.]

He might find such good friends in the Court to procure in His cause.”¹ Ridley was one of those who believe that the work of social amelioration should go hand in hand with definitely spiritual work—indeed, that the two cannot properly be dis-severed. Ridley’s earnestness was rewarded, and so long as he remained Bishop of London the hospitals in which he took so warm an interest seem to have been supplied with sufficient funds;² but when his influence passed away they failed to receive adequate support, and the numbers of those maintained in them had to be reduced.³

Possibly the most interesting and instructive lesson to be learnt from the various efforts to help the poor in London during this period is that there was evidently a serious attempt towards a definite and comprehensive organization. The various institutions re-established worked—at least to some extent—in connection with each other.⁴ Each supplied an essential part of a comprehensive scheme. Without each of these parts the scheme as a whole must have failed. Men like Bishop Ridley had risen above the idea that alms were to be merely palliative: he and his co-workers were making at least some attempt to prevent mendicancy by the removal of its causes. They tried to educate the children, to heal the sick, and to train the idle to work.

Efforts to help the poor, to train the children, to find work for the idle and so prevent mendicancy, were made in many other towns besides London. In Lincoln no one was to give to beggars who had not a badge, the idle were to be set to work, and those who refused work were expelled; also “young people who lived idly” were apprenticed. In Ipswich compulsory assessments were made for the poor, and those who refused to pay

¹ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

² It is interesting to note that in 1553, besides the 280 children maintained within Christ’s Hospital, another 100 were boarded out in the country.

³ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁴ “Vagrants who were taken to Bridewell, and found to be ill, were sent on to St. Bartholomew’s or St. Thomas’s, while, on the other hand, a whipping was administered to the idlers after cure at St. Thomas’s, and the beadle of St. Bartholomew’s had special orders to prevent discharged inmates from begging” (Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 39).

were to be punished. At Cambridge the churchwardens made a careful list of all the poor people in their respective parishes ; they were also to inquire into the cases of those who had come into their parishes within three years ; and collectors were chosen to obtain alms in the churches. These are sufficient instances to show that during this period the relief of the poor was regarded more as a municipal and parochial than as a national responsibility.

During the short reign of Edward VI. several Acts of Parliament were passed which cannot be neglected by those who would study the development of opinion in regard to the treatment of the poor. An Act of the first year of this reign¹ states that "idleness and vagabondage is the mother and root of all thefts, robberies, and other evil acts and mischiefs," which the King and Parliament had long tried to repress ; "but owing to the foolish pity of them which should have seen the laws executed, the said goodlie statutes have hitherto had small effect." In the same Act we have an official recognition of what can only be described as one of the worst abuses of actual slavery. By a provision of this Act any young beggar, or child of any beggar, between five and fourteen years of age might be taken from such beggar by any person who would promise to bring the child up in some honest occupation. This child, if a male, was bound to this person to the age of twenty-four ; if a female, to the age of twenty ; and "may be used in all points as a slave for the time above specified." The master or mistress is even empowered "to let, set forth, sell, bequeath, or give the service and labour of such slave-child (*sic*) to any person or persons whomsoever he will."² The Act goes even further than this: it enjoins that "slaves or children so adjudged, wounding their master or mistress in resisting their corrections or otherwise," are "to suffer the pains of death as in case of felony." It is somewhat difficult for us to understand what the conception of "My duty towards my neighbour" must have been among the men who

¹ 1 Edward VI., cap. 3. Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. i., pp. 129 *et seq.*

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 131 *et seq.*

framed this Act, or among those who voted for it ; yet both must have been—whether at heart they held Reformation principles or not—at least conforming members of the Church of England. At the same time we must remember that even in the nineteenth century Guardians of the poor, and manufacturers who obtained children from the Guardians, if they did not actually condemn to death “ slave-children conspiring to do their master or mistress mischief of any kind,” did so treat such children or permitted them to be so treated that thousands of them came to a premature death, and still more thousands were condemned to a life of constant ill-health. Whether because even in that age the Act (upon reflection) was regarded as too savage in its punishments, or whether it was proved by experience that “ force was no remedy ” (the examples of which are numerous), I know not, but this repulsive Act was repealed within two years of its promulgation, and an Act of Henry VIII. was revived in its place.¹

In 1551-52 another Act² was passed which, because we are specially considering the connection between the Church and the poor, demands more than a passing reference. This Act shows that although the State was now busy in laying down laws with regard to the treatment of the poor, it was still to the Church that help was mainly looked for. In this Act it is directed that in every city, town, and parish, a book shall be kept by the clergyman and churchwardens, containing a list, first of the householders, and secondly of the impotent poor ; also that in towns the mayor and head officers, and in every parish the parson and churchwardens, shall yearly in Whitsun-week “ openly in the church and quietly after Divine service ” call the people together and there elect two or more persons to be collectors of the charitable alms for the relief of the poor. Then, on one of the two next Sundays, when the people are at church, “ the said collectors shall gently ask and demand of every man and woman

¹ It is interesting to notice that in this same Act “ the curate of every parish, ‘ according to such talent as God has given him,’ is enjoined to exhort his parishioners to remember the poor according to their means, and the need there be for their help ” (Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 132).

² 5 and 6 Edward VI., cap. 2.

what they of their charity will give weekly towards the relief of the poor, and the same is to be written in the same book. And the collectors shall justly gather and truly distribute the same charitable alms weekly to the said poor and impotent persons, without fraud or covine, favour or affection, and after such sort that the more impotent may have the more help, and such as can get part of their living have the less, and by the discretion of the collector to be put to such labour as they are able to do ; but none are to go or sit openly begging.” Then the Act goes on to state that if anyone refuses to give help towards the poor, or discourages others from so doing, the “parson and churchwardens are gently to exhort him”; and suppose he still remains obstinate, then the Bishop is to send for him, “to induce and persuade him by charitable ways and means.”¹

This Act proves—and there is much other evidence to the same effect—that it was becoming more and more difficult to obtain, by voluntary methods, sufficient money to support even the impotent poor. It also shows that it was still to people in their Christian capacity—that is, as members of the Church—that the appeal to provide for the poor was made. For we must presume that the exhorting by the parson, and the inducing and persuading by the bishop, would be based upon Christian teaching, and would appeal to that teaching as the chief reason for making this provision. It should also be noticed that, apparently, begging of any kind by any person is forbidden by this particular Act. Three other Acts were passed in this reign which affected, if indirectly, the welfare of the poor. One² was an Act preventing combinations of workpeople, another³ consisted in a further attempt to prevent arable land being turned into pasture, while the third,⁴ forbidding “gigge-mills,” was an instance of the fear of machinery interfering with manual labour.

Two years after Mary came to the throne—that is, in A.D. 1555—an Act⁵ was passed for “putting down valiant beggars,”

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

² 2 and 3 Edward VI., cap. 15.

³ 5 and 6 Edward VI., cap. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, cap. 22.

⁵ 2 and 3 Philip and Mary, cap. 5.

and for relieving those "who are poor in very deed." This Act confirms certain previous legislation, but makes various amendments to this. The first of these is that instead of in "Whitsun-week," it enacts that now "on some one holy-day in Christmas" the people shall "openly in church, after divine service," be exhorted to give in aid of the poor. The reason for this change of date is not evident. Was there a diversity of opinion between those of the old and those of the new ways of thinking as to the relative importance of Christmas and Whitsuntide? Another amendment is to the effect that "if any parish has more poor than it is able to relieve, upon certifying the number and names of the persons with which it is overburthened to two justices of the peace, they may grant to as many of such poor folk as they think good "a licence to go abroad to beg and to receive charitable alms out of the said parish, in which licence the places to which such poor folk may resort shall be named." "Such licensed beggars are to wear openly, on the breast and back of their outermost garment, some notable badge to be assigned by the parish authorities." Here we seem to have very clear evidence of the recrudescence of the permission to go begging which was so widely recognized in pre-Reformation times.

The reign of Elizabeth is from almost every point of view one of exceptional interest and importance. It certainly is so in regard to measures taken for dealing with poverty. On the surface these changes appear to be due to national and civic authorities, and to be only very indirectly due to religious or ecclesiastical influences. Actually, I believe, they were very largely owing to these; for if we look for the causes of the immense changes which took place in various directions during this reign, we cannot fail to see that these were largely due to an improvement in the national character; and this was surely, among other causes, due to a more true teaching of Christianity. The effects of the Reformation were now beginning to be felt; there was an altogether healthier tone both in the rulers of the nation and in public opinion generally.

There can, I think, be little doubt that during the latter part

of the reign of Henry VIII. and during the reigns of Edward VI. and Mary the condition of the mass of the people had been growing steadily worse. This period has been compared to that between 1760 and 1850, one to which later we shall have to pay special attention. "In each case great economic transitions are in progress, and in each case they are complicated by avoidable and irrational evils. In each, also, the misery of the mass of the people advances rapidly."¹ I would venture to add that in each period what little influence religion did exert was not directed towards the real or permanent welfare of the people.

"The general aims of Elizabeth's government were to maintain the naval and military power of the population, and to provide a decent and secure subsistence for all Englishmen . . . a well-nourished, regularly employed, and prosperous population seemed one main condition of national power."² We are to-day very apt to complain of interference with the liberty of the subject. Probably such complaints have been made in many periods. But the interferences which we suffer are small indeed compared with those, not only attempted, but put into force in the sixteenth century. Government was then very really "paternal," both locally and nationally, and the minute regulations in force in regard to the conduct of the individual (and it was assumed that all these regulations were for his benefit) were extraordinary both in their extent and variety.³ This "paternal" conception of governmental function is one of the many proofs that at this time there was undoubtedly an increasing sense of social responsibility, which is again proved by the many attempts to prevent further sheep-farming in place of tillage,⁴ as well as in the efforts to regulate prices in favour of the poor.⁵ I would also notice the integrity of the great Elizabethan statesmen. They

¹ Meredith, "Economic History of England," p. 99. ² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³ On the "minute domestic character" of the Elizabethan legislation see Loch, "Charity and Social Life," chap. xxix.

⁴ *E.g.*, by 5 Elizabeth, cap. 2.

⁵ There was undoubtedly a considerable rise in the price of provisions during the latter half of the sixteenth century; but, on the whole, the rise in wages seems to have been proportionate with this. That this should be so was the object of 5 Elizabeth, cap. 4, which admits that "wages and allowances limited and rated" in former statutes "are too small."

took their work seriously ; they were not self-seeking ; on the contrary, they seemed to have had a real and honest desire to promote the public welfare.

In 1562-63 an Act¹ was passed which, because it marked a new departure, demands special attention.² This Act perpetuates most of the provisions of the Act passed in Mary's reign—*e.g.*, it provides for the appointment of collectors of alms ; it licenses the poor to beg where a parish is overburdened, and requires such beggars to wear badges. It likewise enacts that those who refuse to give to the poor are to be gently exhorted and persuaded thereto by the clergy and churchwardens. But in the case of those who after this refuse to give, it provides a means whereby they may be *compelled* to give. It orders that if after exhortation, first by the parson and churchwardens of the parish, and then by the bishop of the diocese, "any person of his froward or wilful mind shall obstinately refuse to give weekly to the relief of the poor according to his ability," the bishop shall have authority to bind him under a penalty of £10 to appear at the next sessions. Here the justices are again "charitably and gently to persuade the said obstinate person to extend his charity towards the relief of the poor." If this persuasion fails, the justices "may sesse, tax, and limit upon every such obstinate person so refusing, according to their good discretion, what sum the said obstinate person shall pay." If he then refuses to pay, the justices may, "upon the complaint of the collectors and churchwardens of the parish," commit him to prison until he pay the same, "together with the arrearages thereof." Thus this Act marks the first instance of a national compulsory assessment for the relief of the poor—one which has continued down to the present time. In the same year another Act³ was passed—first compelling certain classes of people to work, and all classes in time of harvest, and then regulating the rate of wages⁴ and the price of certain kinds of provisions.

¹ 5 Elizabeth, cap. 3.

² See Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 151, 152.

³ 5 Elizabeth, cap. 4. Upon this Act see Loch, "Charity and Social Life," pp. 310 *et seq.*

⁴ These were fixed by the justices, "after calling to them such discreet and grave persons as they shall think meet, and after conferring together

Ten years later—that is, in 1572-73—another important and extremely comprehensive Act¹ was passed, which not only dealt with almost every conceivable kind of poverty, but stated what particular means should be taken for the prevention or suppression of each. This Act provides another proof of the change to which I have already called attention: it does not mention the ecclesiastical authorities; it also marks another step in the development of the national conscience with regard both to the evils of poverty and of the duty of doing everything possible to combat these. By its provisions “beggars are to be severely punished; persons harbouring or relieving them are to be fined;² aged and infirm poor are to have appointed for them by the justices meet and convenient places . . . for their habitations and abidings.” It also provided that “if any of the said poor people refuse to be bestowed in these abiding-places . . . but covet still to hold on to their trade of begging, or after they be once bestowed in the said abiding-places do depart and beg,” they are to be severely punished.

Of many other Acts passed during Elizabeth's reign, one at least must be mentioned,³ if for no other reason, because it “is still the foundation and textbook of English Poor Law.”⁴ By this Act “four, three, or two substantial householders” are to be yearly nominated in Easter week, and these, with the churchwardens, are to be the overseers of the poor. These are “to raise weekly or otherwise in every parish by taxation of every inhabitant . . . and every occupier of lands, houses, etc.,” such sums of money as “they shall think fit”—(1) for setting to work the children of parents not able to maintain them; (2) for setting to work poor people “who use no ordinary trade of life to get their living by”; (3) for providing various materials

respecting the plenty or scarcity of the time, and other circumstances necessary to be considered.” Justices, in theory, fixed wages until 1814.

¹ 14 Elizabeth, cap. 5.

² Sir George Nicholls points out that the encouragement given to beggars by the statute of Philip and Mary, and unfortunately continued by 1 Elizabeth, cap. 18, had evidently produced very evil results.

³ 43 Elizabeth, cap. 2.

⁴ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

for these to work upon; (4) "for the necessary relief of impotent persons not able to work."¹ To carry out these objects the churchwardens and overseers are to meet together at least once in every month in the parish church, after Divine service on the Sunday, to consider of some good course to be taken." By this Act it is also enjoined that if any parish cannot provide for its own poor, then any parishes within the hundred or county "may be taxed, rated, and assessed . . . for the said purpose."

As we look back over the efforts, whether legislative or otherwise, made to deal with the problem of the poor from the time of the dissolution of the monasteries to the death of Queen Elizabeth, we can see, I think, a gradual acceptance in practice of this undoubted truth—that, while mendicancy and vagabondage must at all costs be as far as possible abolished, merely coercive or repressive measures will not suffice to effect this. There must be remedies as well as punishments. The sources of the evil must be attacked: children must be trained to work, and work must be found for those who apparently cannot find it. There must also be adequate relief for the impotent poor. But side by side with this development in public opinion, we see another development—namely, in the methods adopted for finding the means to deal with and to relieve the poor. We see the method of compulsory assessment being gradually adopted; and though private charity did not cease, though we constantly come across earnest exhortations towards a greater liberality in bestowing it, we find a growing conviction that by itself it was wholly inadequate to provide the money necessary for the poor, if these were to be raised out of a state of destitution.² Undoubtedly during the reign of Elizabeth, and during the succeeding reigns, a very considerable amount of

¹ Upon the effects of this Act see Loch, "Charity and Social Life," pp. 314 *et seq.*

² "The aim of the two Acts of 1601, taken together, was to utilize charitable gifts and to encourage donors to bequeath them. What was not available from voluntary sources was to be raised by taxation" (Loch, "Charity and Social Life," p. 319).

private charity was given for specific purposes, but there was a growing tendency to place this charity more and more in the charge of the municipalities or other lay trustees. The dispensing of it was no longer confided chiefly to so-called spiritual persons—*i.e.*, to the clergy.

There is, it appears to me, a very remarkable analogy between the development of compulsory assessment for the poor in the period we have been considering and that of the compulsory payment for elementary, and even secondary, education during recent years. Both were at first instituted as merely supplementary to voluntary or charitable effort, but both in process of time gradually superseded such effort. As to how far it was inevitable that they should do so, opinions will probably continue to differ.

IX.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BETWEEN the death of Queen Elizabeth and the beginning of the "Industrial Revolution," there stretches a period of about 150 years. It cannot be said, I think, that the Church (as a corporate body) took a prominent, or even an adequate, part in the relief of the poor during this period; though doubtless there were, as I shall show, individual leaders of the Church who, at various times, did take a deep and real interest in the welfare of the poor, and who gave liberally to their support.¹ If our task could be discharged by simply relating what the Church did for the relief of the poor during this age, a very brief treatment of it might be sufficient. Then, again, those who have studied history know that any particular age can only be adequately explained by careful reference to the age which preceded it. Consequently the age of the "Industrial Revolution" (in which we may be said to be still living) cannot be understood without at least some conception of the conditions which existed in the age we are now considering.² It is, then, as being necessary to explain present conditions and present difficulties, that we must primarily study the measures which were taken on behalf of the poor during the seventeenth, and the first half of the eighteenth,

¹ The immense number of charities for the benefit of the poor founded by various individuals during the seventeenth century proves that the spirit of charity was then very much alive. A glance into the origin of existing parochial charities—to say nothing of the great number of those which have been lost—will prove how large a proportion of these date from this period.

² On this epoch as "a period of preparation" see Meredith, "Economic History of England," pp. 181 *et seq.* Also during this period, as I shall show, our present Poor Law became consolidated; the principles upon which, to some extent, it is still administered became fixed.

century. I say "primarily" because I do not wish my readers to think that a study of this particular age is in itself unfruitful ; on the contrary, if we study it carefully, we may learn some extremely valuable lessons from it. This is especially true of the period covered by the reigns of James I. and Charles I.

These two reigns were, so far as our subject is concerned, extremely like the previous reign in one respect, and extremely unlike it in another. In them, as during the time of Elizabeth, we find that the care of the poor had largely passed into the hands of authorities which were only ecclesiastical so far as this, that the churchwardens of the parish were *ex officio* associated¹ in the administration of the Poor Law of that date. On the other hand, there was this great dissimilarity : the reign of Elizabeth was one of active *legislative* development, while during the reigns of James I. and Charles I., we find that it was rather an improved *administration* of the law than the making of any great changes in the law itself that was the chief object of the Central Authority.

The most important of all the Acts relating to the poor passed during the reign of Elizabeth, we saw, was that of 1601,² which established the principle, "that property must be chargeable for the relief of poverty" and "that the security of the one is endangered by the extremity of the other."³ It appears that it took some considerable time before the various provisions of this Act came into general operation. It is one thing for a Central Authority to order that machinery requisite for a variety of purposes shall be set up, and also for this Authority to give powers to Justices and other local authorities ; it is another thing to set this machinery working satisfactorily in all the various parts of the kingdom,⁴ especially when we remember how slow

¹ With the overseers.

² 43 Elizabeth, cap. 2. See Nicholls' "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., pp. 189 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴ Nicholls states (p. 245) that "there were places in which no rate was made for twenty, thirty, and even forty years after the passing of this Act." He quotes from a pamphlet of 1622, which complains of there being parishes in which there had been no collection for the poor for seven years.

were the means of communication in those days compared with those we now possess.

Some of the most important provisions of this Act deal with the duties of overseers and with the powers entrusted to them. These officials were not appointed for the first time in 1601, but they were then first empowered to make and collect the rates requisite for carrying out their duties. They, together with the churchwardens of the parish, were henceforth¹ those actually responsible for seeing that the various provisions of the Poor Law were properly carried into effect. Here it will probably be well to remind ourselves of the actual ecclesiastical condition of England at this time. As Sir G. Nicholls says, "The great bulk of the people belonged to the Established Church, and they regarded it as an essential part of the government, parochial as well as general."² Hence, from a religious, as well as from an ecclesiastical, point of view, not only the churchwardens, but also the overseers would represent both the people and the Church in a way in which they do not any longer represent them. Not only those who administered the law, but also Parliament which made the law, may consequently be considered to have expressed the views generally held in the Church at that time as to the proper treatment of the poor.

As an example of this, and as an explanation of provisions which still exist in many parishes at the present time, we may notice an Act passed in the seventh year of James I.³ This Act deals with the application of money given for the apprenticing of poor children. It states that much money has been given for this purpose, and that more is likely to be given, and its object is to encourage "other well-disposed people" to bestow "money to the same good and godly purposes";⁴ therefore it enacts that "all money so given shall for ever continue to be used for such purposes only, and that corporations in cities and

¹ Until 1782, when "Gilbert's Act" restricted their duties to collecting the rate and accounting for it.

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

³ 7 James I., cap. 3.

⁴ An instance of the truth that the Poor Law was originally intended to *supplement* private charity. See Leonard, "English Poor Relief," p. 137.

towns corporate, and in parishes and towns not corporate, the parson or vicar, together with the constables, churchwardens and overseers of the poor for the time being, 'shall have the nomination and placing of such apprentices and the finding and employment of all such moneys as are so given for the continual binding forth of such apprentices.'"¹ This Act, as I have already stated, shows, first, the exceedingly close co-operation of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities at that time; and, secondly, it reveals why to-day the vicar of an ancient parish is frequently a trustee (indeed, often chairman of the trustees) of charities for apprenticeship and other purposes.

Another Act of the same year is an additional proof of this co-operation. This Act² is "for the due execution of divers Laws and Statutes heretofore made against Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars, etc." It orders Houses of Correction to be provided in every county by a certain date, and if not provided by this date every justice of the county is to be fined £5; also a general search is to be made for undesirable persons, and "the constables and tithing men" are to give an account upon oath in writing and under the hand of the minister of every parish"³ what disorderly persons they have apprehended. All this goes to prove not only how active, but, indeed, how efficient local organization was becoming.

We have now entered upon the period when the relations between the Crown and the people were such that Parliaments assembled only to be prorogued, and when it was practically impossible to pass legislative measures of any kind. Indeed, between 1610 and 1624 this seems actually to have been the case. When Parliament met in this latter year, the first Act⁴ it passed was one for "erecting of Hospitals and Working-houses for the Poor." I mention this Act for this reason, because although the arrears of legislation must have been enormous, so keen apparently was public opinion at the time

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

² 7 James I., cap. 4. Its provisions deal mainly with administration.

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

⁴ 21 James I., cap. 1. It makes perpetual 39 Elizabeth, cap. 5.

in regard to the poor, that the very first Act passed after fourteen years of silence had reference to a question connected with them.

Throughout these two reigns, and especially during the long intervals which elapsed between the summoning of successive Parliaments, the Privy Council¹ became in effect the supreme administrative authority in all matters connected with the relief of the poor; and the various "Orders" which were issued by the Council at this time should be carefully studied, that is, if we are to understand how the poor were dealt with during this period.² These "Orders" were both local and general; they sometimes had reference to particular difficulties in particular districts; at other times they were general regulations applying to the whole kingdom. On the whole, these Orders in Council were wisely drawn up, and they show not only a knowledge of the needs of the poor at the time, but as a rule they meet these needs in a very satisfactory way. Some of the difficulties with which these Orders deal may be noticed: first, they frequently call the attention of the local authorities, the Justices of the Peace, etc., to the remissness with which they were administering the law, and they threaten punishment if it is not put into force. Secondly, they often issue temporary regulations in reference to the sale of corn at a cheap price in times of famine following bad harvests, and they also order that there shall be a supply of grain to the poor. Thirdly, they command that in times of scarcity the local authorities shall provide work for the workers.³ In those days a bad harvest,

¹ "It seems . . . that the Crown claimed a sort of supplemental right of legislation to perfect and carry into effect what the spirit of existing laws might require . . . as well as . . . a sovereign power which sanctioned commands beyond the legal prerogative, for the sake of public safety" (Hallam's "Constitutional History," vol. i., p. 237).

² "On the Work of the Privy Council in regard to the Relief of the Poor." See Leonard, "English Poor Relief," chap. viii., "Parliament and the Privy Council."

³ Leonard, *op. cit.* (p. 148), quotes as follows from an Order in Council: "This being the rule by w^{ch} both the woolgrower, the clothier and merchant must be governed. That whosoever had a part of the gaine in profitable times since his Ma^{ty} happy raigne must now in the decay of Trade . . . beare a part of the publicke losses as may best conduce to the good of the publicke and the maintenance of the generall trade."

and especially two or three poor harvests in succession, meant a famine, because there was not then, as now, the means of procuring an immediate supply of corn from other countries. In 1621 and 1622 there were two exceptionally bad harvests, which led to very serious disturbances in different parts of the country. Another matter upon which the Council uttered proclamations was upon the necessity of the country gentlemen dwelling at home upon their estates instead of living luxuriously in London about the Court. Two reasons were stated for this proclamation: (1) Because of "inconveniences which of necessity must ensue by the absence of those out of their countries upon whose care a great and principall part of the subordinate government of this realme doth depend"; (2) because the King "was perswaded that by this way of reviving the laudable and ancient housekeeping of this realme the poore and such as are most pinched in times of scarcity and want will be much releevd and comforted."¹

We must now pass to the reign of Charles I. In this reign, as in the previous one, so far as the care of the poor is concerned, we find much more attention paid to the administration of the existing law than any effort to enact new laws. This is only what we might expect when we remember that during the greater part of this reign the action of Parliament as a legislative body was practically dormant. Three years after Charles came to the throne (in 1628) an Act² was passed dealing with parish apprentices and parish labour. The object of this Act was to prevent parish officers—churchwardens and overseers—binding children as apprentices except as a means and for the purpose of better relieving the poor. From this it seems as if some of these parish officers had been tempted "to use the poor-rates to establish manufactures with a view to profit by pauper labour."³ Though it was only three years since he had ascended the throne, this was the third Parliament which Charles had summoned, and this was the last Act which this

¹ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

² 3 Charles I., cap. 5.

³ Nicholls' "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 251.

particular Parliament passed. Upon its dissolution Charles tried the experiment of governing without any Parliament at all. But whatever other evils ensued, it cannot be said that the poor suffered in consequence of this decision. On the contrary, during the next few years their welfare seems to have been studied with more than ordinary solicitude. In 1630 the King issued a very important Commission "for putting in execution the laws relating to the poor."¹ Among the commissioners were Abbot, then Archbishop of Canterbury, and Laud, who, within three years, was to succeed him. The Commission went very thoroughly to work, different commissioners undertaking different districts. Immediately after the appointment of the Commission there was issued a very general "Book of Orders,"² or rather of "Orders" and "Directions." The "Orders" come first, and indicate what must be the method of administration; the "Directions" command that existing Statutes, such as those for the repression of begging, for binding of apprentices, and for the provision of work and of relief, shall be enforced. There can, I think, be no doubt that during the ten years which followed the issue of this Book of Orders³ we find (for that period) an exceptionally thorough and, on the whole, wise administration of the laws relating to the poor. The experience is a proof of what a small but able and earnest body of men at the head of a widespread organization may do to make that organization thoroughly efficient. The real difficulty in connection with all schemes for the welfare of the poor, whether these refer to large or small areas, is generally

¹ Nicholls' "History of the Poor Law," vol. i., p. 252.

² See Leonard, *op. cit.*, pp. 158 *et seq.*; Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 254 *et seq.* Sir George Nicholls draws attention to the similarity between the objects of the Commissions of 1630 and those of 1833—"to prevent a lax or faulty action on the part of the local authorities, and to secure an effective administration of the law throughout the country."

³ As an indication of the conception of the scope of the Poor Law at that time the title of this Book of Orders is interesting: "Orders and Directions, together with a Commission, for the better administration of Justice, and more perfect Information of his Majesty how and by whom the Law and Statutes tending to the Relief of the Poor, the well ordering and training up of Youth in Trades, and the Reformation of Disorders and disordered Persons are executed throughout the kingdom."

found to consist in maintaining the efficiency of those upon whom ultimately the actual work devolves. Scheme after scheme, each excellent in itself, has failed in various periods because there was wanting at the centre that administrative zeal which demanded efficient work at the extremities.

In dealing with this period Miss Leonard makes two statements which are extremely interesting :¹ first, she holds that "there are grounds for believing that never since the days of Charles I. have we had either so much provision of work for the able-bodied, or so complete a system of looking after the more needy classes when they were suffering from the effects of fire, pestilence, and famine." She also holds that "at this time the history of the poor is more distinctly connected than usual with the history of the nation as a whole." The second statement to which I refer is as follows: "The personal government of Charles I. has been more associated with the exaction of Ship Money than with attempts to enforce a system which has much in common with the socialistic schemes with which we are familiar on paper, yet these eleven years are remarkable for more continuous efforts to enforce socialistic measures than has been made by the central Government of any other great European country."²

I have found it somewhat difficult to estimate the amount of private charity given during the period with which we are dealing; but that in certain directions it was very considerable I think there can be no doubt. It seems to have been especially rich in the way of endowed charities of various kinds. For instance, about this time a large number of almshouses (commonly known as "hospitals") seem to have been founded in various parts of England.³ These were maintained by private liberality, though some of them were controlled by municipal

¹ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

² Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 164. Miss Leonard believes that "Abbot and Laud, Wentworth and Falkland, Dorchester and Wimbledon were the members of the Council most closely connected with this policy" [towards the poor].

³ "Probably there were nearly as many of these in existence then as there are to-day, in spite of the fact that our population has increased sixfold" (Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 207).

and other public authorities. Also quite a number of pre-Reformation foundations had passed into the hands of the Corporations of various towns, and here and there we come across a pre-Reformation hospital which, having passed by purchase into private hands, had by its purchaser been returned to its original use or purpose.¹ Among donors of endowed charities for the poor we find four Archbishops of Canterbury—Grindal, Abbot, Laud, and Whitgift. One favourite method of giving charity was to provide sums of money for binding poor children as apprentices—*e. g.*, Archbishop Laud gave money to apprentice ten poor boys at Reading. Another method of charity was to provide means whereby work might be given to the unemployed.² Of course a "workhouse" in those days was literally what its name signifies. Archbishop Abbot founded a workhouse at Guildford, and in many other places money was freely given for this purpose. Yet another method of charity was to lend money to young men to enable them to set up in business for themselves.³ If we were to search into the origin and history of many existing charities and into the history of yet more which have either been diverted from their original purpose or unfortunately have been altogether lost, we should find that a very considerable portion of these dated from the first half of the seventeenth century. This is especially true of such charities as consisted in giving away small sums of money on particular Sundays or Feasts (generally after hearing a sermon), or in the distribution of loaves of bread. One point in estimating the condition of the poor at this time must not be forgotten, namely, that considering the size or number of the population of England in those days, the proportion of such charities as I have named was very much greater than it is at the present time. We have only to think of the population of London and

¹ Miss Leonard gives several instances (*op. cit.*, p. 209).

² This seems to have been a method of helping the poor specially favoured in the first half of the sixteenth century.

³ These sums were lent either interest free or at a low rate. From 6 to 12 per cent. was the ordinary rate for money lent in business at that time.

other towns in those days, and then to remember that very many of our existing charities were then available in order to see that this was so. Regarded from the legal point of view, a wide chasm to-day separates the merely poor from the pauper or person in aid of statutory relief. In the seventeenth century this chasm was far narrower.¹ We have only to investigate the distribution of corn in times of scarcity and of work when trade was bad to find out how difficult it is to determine how much of either was voluntary and how much was effected under legal compulsion.

The period of the Civil War was naturally one of very considerable social disorganization, though actually this was not nearly so great as might have been expected ; that it was so comparatively small is a proof of the excellence of the local administration existing when the war broke out.² Had this been less perfect, the disorganization must have been far more serious. Undoubtedly the poor did suffer to a very considerable extent during the progress of the war.³ People who had been accustomed to give considerable sums in charity were no longer able to do so. Funds which had been devoted to the poor now went to pay the expenses of the war—in fact, many of the gentry of the kingdom were practically ruined. The Justices of the Peace who had been responsible for the administration of the Poor Law were now engaged in raising troops for King or Parliament ; and the overseers, instead of collecting rates for the support of the poor, were busy collecting money to pay the soldiers. As examples of the disorganization which ensued, the following instances may be cited : At Christ's Hospital in London there were in 1641 no less than 900 children ; in 1647

¹ In those days "all classes were relieved because poor relief was originally part of a paternal system of government under which the rulers regarded the maintenance of the usual prosperity of every class as part of their duties" (Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 265, who quotes the "Memoirs of Colonel Ludlow."

³ *E.g.*, from fluctuations in the price of wheat, which was 52s. a quarter in 1625, but rose to 76s. and 80s. in 1649 ; in 1653 it was 35s. 6d. ; in 1659 it was 66s. 6d.

there were only 597 ; at St. Thomas's Hospital in 1641 more than 1,000 patients were relieved ; in 1647 the number had fallen to 682. From the former hospital there were serious complaints of the diminution of contributions for the support of the charity.¹ The laws relating to the poor were also badly administered because, as we have already noticed, those who were responsible for seeing to their administration were otherwise engaged. If this was the case, we need not be surprised that, even when charitable funds were available, these were sometimes corruptly applied.

One curious example of the straits to which local administrators were put from want of funds, and of a strange device to remedy this want, is afforded by a suggestion from the burgesses of Great Yarmouth. These suggested that the spoils of Norwich Cathedral might be used for the relief of the poor ; they petitioned Parliament to "be pleased to grant vs such a part of the lead and other vseful materialls of that vast and altogether vseles Cathedrall in Norwich towards building of a works house to employ our almost sterued poore," etc.² It was the able-bodied poor, those out of work, who apparently suffered most severely from the effects of the war. Some effort does seem to have been made to supply the needs of the impotent and of the children, but there was no replenishing of the public "stocks"—*i.e.*, of raw material, which, before the war, were maintained by various local authorities, and by means of which those poor who were able to work could do something towards earning a living. In fact, never again has this particular means of assisting the poor been used to the same extent as it was during the period preceding the Civil War.

I now turn to the reign of Charles II. In the year 1662 an Act was passed³ which, from its far-reaching consequences upon the poor (some of which consequences exist at the present time),

¹ Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

² Leonard, *op. cit.*, pp. 273, 274. "Part of the proceeds of Lichfield Cathedral seem actually to have been granted to the poor of Stafford" (*ibid.*, p. 274).

³ 14 Charles II., cap. 12.

demands more than a passing notice. I refer to that known as the "Settlement Act," the cause of which was stated thus, that "by reason of some defects in the law, poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to settle themselves in those parishes where there is the best stock, the largest commons or waste to build cottages, and the most woods for them to burn and destroy; and when they have consumed it, then to another parish, and at last become rogues and vagabonds, to the great discouragement of of parishes to provide stocks, where it is liable to be devoured by strangers."¹ The Act provided that any person or persons coming to settle in a parish in any tenement under the value of ten pounds might be removed into the parish where they were "last legally settled." Such a law had long been in force against vagabonds and beggars, but this Act enormously widened its scope. The Act, so it is said, was carried through Parliament mainly by the aid of the members for London and Westminster, and its chief object was to prevent a continually increasing number of poor people settling in those cities. The actual consequences of the Act were probably not foreseen by the country members; had they been so it would not have been passed. As Sir George Nicholls truly says: "A fuller consideration of its provisions at the time might have shown . . . that to remove persons from a parish in order to prevent their becoming chargeable might end in practically restricting them through life to their place of birth, destroying the incentives to independent effort, and perpetuating a low state of civilization. We now know that such have, to a great extent, been the consequences of this measure, notwithstanding the frequent emendations which it has received."²

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 280. On the Act of Settlement see "The English Poor Law System," by Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, pp. 9 *et seq.*, who write: "It is an uncontested and incontestable fact that this important Act, of which the consequences were so serious, was pushed through all the stages of legislation without affording either Parliament or public opinion time for discussion, merely because the representatives of London and a few wealthy landlords were desirous of lessening the burden of their own poor rates."

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

Both the causes and the results of this Act still remain with us to a great extent at the present time. The greater part of the money raised for the maintenance of the poor is still raised parochially; hence it is still to the advantage of every "parish" to have as few poor to support as possible. If the charge for the poor had been a national instead of a parochial charge, no doubt every trace of the "Law of Settlement" would long ago have disappeared.¹ As it is, though very greatly modified, the law still remains; and the consequences are still perceptible in the tenacity with which many, especially of the agricultural, poor still cling to the parish in which they were born. Yet experience has taught us that, especially in times of bad trade, the mobility of labour is a condition at which we ought to aim. Labour should be able to follow trade, as trade will follow conditions most advantageous to its development and success. Cheapness of materials, facilities for transit, local demands, as well as a supply of suitable labour, all help to govern the choice of the situation of any particular trade. To do anything towards tying a man down to the place in which he was born is to hinder his efforts towards self-improvement. It discourages self-effort, the one thing above all others which those who seek the welfare of the poor would foster and increase.

At the time of which we are speaking there was evidently in the minds of those charitably disposed a strong feeling in favour of providing work for the poor at the cost of the community.² Sir Matthew Hale, the eminent judge, published a work in which, besides advising that children shall be instructed in trade or work, he very strongly recommends that a sufficient number of workhouses shall be built in which a sufficient stock of

¹ It should be clearly understood that by the Settlement Act "the whole of the labouring classes throughout the country were subjected to a restriction which had previously been applied only to the idle and impotent" (Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 285).

² I know no more striking example of the difficulty with which the lessons of history are learnt and of the ease with which they are forgotten than the many demands to provide work for the poor at the public expense. Many of these demands have been made in quite recent times. Cf. Reports of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1909), Part I., p. 87.

materials shall be provided, and where the poor shall be set to work. He gives two reasons for this: Firstly, that no man will have a need to beg or steal when he may get his living better by working; secondly, that "no man will be so hurtful to the public as to give to those who beg, and thereby to encourage them, when he is sure they may gain their living by working." He also states that "by this means the wealth of the nation will be increased, manufactures advanced, and everybody put into a capacity of eating his own bread." So firmly was the worthy judge convinced of the value of his ideas that he commends his plan as "a debt which we owe to our nature as men, a work highly necessary to us as Englishmen, and our first duty as Christians."¹

I have given these long extracts because they reveal to us the ideas upon both political economy and Christian philanthropy of one of the best representatives of that age. But increased experience has taught us that, not only from the point of view of the political economist, but from that of the practical worker for the permanent welfare of the poor, Sir Matthew Hale's ideas are hopelessly wrong. The public provision of work leads to the theory of "the right to work," which from its consequences, wherever it has been tried, is now condemned by practically every real friend of the poor.

The reign of Charles II. is remarkable for the attempts which were made during its course to "protect" certain trades in the interest of home industries with (it was stated) the object of benefiting the workers, though there is also evidence to prove that the interests of the landed gentry were not forgotten. I have no intention of entering upon a question much debated at the present time further than to point out that, among other projects tried in those days, efforts were made to prevent the importation of goods free of duty, "to the great detriment of the kingdom and the non-employment of the poor."²

There is little that calls for our notice during the short reign

¹ Quoted by Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 288, 289.

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

of James II., except that it was already found necessary to amend the ill-considered "Law of Settlement," which, owing to its pressure upon the poor, was constantly being evaded. During this reign and that of William and Mary various attempts were made to prevent new-comers from being in a parish for forty days unknown to the authorities, and so obtaining a legal settlement. In one Act¹ it was ordered that every person upon coming into a parish must give a notice of this fact in writing to the overseers or churchwardens; and when this was found insufficient, it was ordered that the churchwarden or overseer was to read the notice of the person's or persons' arrival publicly on the next Lord's Day immediately after Divine Service. This was probably to afford all the parishioners an opportunity of demanding the ejectment of a newcomer "should their officers be remiss or over-indulgent."²

During the reign of William and Mary we meet with a difficulty which was, sooner or later, bound to arise in connection with the relief of the poor, considering who those were who bestowed it. This difficulty arose largely from the practically unlimited powers of churchwardens and overseers. An Act passed in 1691 draws attention to the fact that "these frequently upon frivolous pretences (but chiefly for their own private ends) give relief";³ also that those who have obtained relief, "being entered into the collection bill, do become after that a great charge upon the parish, notwithstanding the occasion or pretence of their receiving collection (or relief) oftentimes ceases, by which means the rates of the poor are daily increased." It is then ordered that a book is to be kept in every parish in which the names of all persons "receiving collection" are to be registered. Then "yearly, in Easter week, or oftener if necessary, this book is to be produced to the parishioners in vestry, and the names of all persons receiving relief are to be called over, and the reasons for their receiving relief examined, and a new list is

¹ 3 William and Mary, cap. 11.

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

³ Section 11 of 3 William and Mary, cap. 11.

to be made and entered of such persons as shall be thought fit to receive collection."

Here it is evidently quite clearly laid down that relief is a parochial charge, whose object is the welfare of the parishioners, towards which each, voluntarily or compulsorily, contributes. Its right application is the interest of all the parishioners; therefore it is their responsibility to see that this is effected. The relics of this old custom are found in hundreds of ancient parishes to-day, where at the Easter Vestry meeting the accounts of those charities which belong to the parish, and over which the Vicar and churchwardens have supervision, are produced for the inspection and ratification of the parishioners.

X.

THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

THERE are two facts, both unhappy ones, which at the present time call for serious examination and equally serious thought. These are, first, the actual condition, economic and religious, of a great number of poor people in this country ; and, secondly, the actual relationship of these people to what may be termed "organized Christianity"—the Church or "the Churches." Both the condition of these people and their relationship to the Church must be considered extremely unsatisfactory. Both are, of course, very largely the product of the past, and they have not come to be what they are in the course of the last hundred or even the last fifty years. Actually, they are by-products of that great movement which is usually and rightly known as the "Industrial Revolution," during which side by side with an immense growth of national wealth, there was an immense increase of poverty, and also of degradation and oppression of the poor. But these evils, which accompanied the Industrial Revolution, were not inevitable ; there was no inherent necessity why they should have come to pass. Actually, they were to a great extent due partly to certain conditions existing when that Revolution first began ; but much more to a want of wisdom in both Church and State during the first century of its progress.

In my last chapter I carried down our history to the death of William III., in 1702. The Industrial Revolution began some fifty years later. It is to this half-century, which covers the reign of Anne and the first two Georges, that the present chapter must be devoted. It was during this half-century that

conditions were permitted to develop which caused a large proportion of the evils of the period which succeeded it.

Nothing is more difficult than to sketch the characteristic features of any age in the compass of a few sentences. The attempt, from the inevitable complexity both of the circumstances and of the various forces at work, is almost bound to be misleading; yet it is essential, if our present subject is to be adequately studied, that there should be at least some clear idea of the general conditions in Church and State in the background.

At the opening of the eighteenth century the position of the English Church was undoubtedly strong; her life was vigorous and her zeal was at least considerable.¹ She was certainly popular in the nation, and both Romanism² and Nonconformity³ were relatively far weaker than they had been for some time past. During the reign of Anne the Church's energy, spirituality, and earnestness were at least maintained. But as the century proceeded there came a rapid decline in every one of these qualities. The Church became more or less a tool of the State, and enthusiasm, indeed earnestness of any kind, rapidly died away. A period of lethargy succeeded a period of vigorous life; and by the middle of the eighteenth century the condition of the Church was in some respects as evil, if not indeed worse, than at any period in her history. The condition of the State offers an instructive parallel. At the death of Anne the country had been almost continuously at war, either within her own borders or with foreign Powers, for nearly a century. Hence, when Walpole came into office, his principle of *quieta non movere*, which he imposed upon the Church, was not unwelcome in the State.

It will be best for me first to notice what steps were taken

¹ "Never since her Reformation had the Church of England given so fair a promise of a useful and prosperous career as she did at the beginning of the eighteenth century. . . . Look at the Church's history in retrospect, as it is pictured by many writers of every school of thought, and a dark scene of melancholy failure presents itself" (Abbey and Overton, "The English Church in the Eighteenth Century," p. 279).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 153. "Rome shared in the strange religious apathy which was dominant, not only in England, but on the Continent."

³ See Dale's "History of English Congregationalism," chapters v. and viii.

by the State—which was then still practically the Church acting in a civic capacity—for the relief of the poor during the reign of Anne. In the first year of the reign we have an Act¹ against “truck,” a form of oppression which still demands the watchful eye of the Legislature. The object of this Act was “to prevent the oppression of the labourers and workmen employed in the manufactures”; it orders that “all payments for work done by them shall be in lawful coin of the realm, and not by any commodities in lieu thereof.” As Sir G. Nicholls says—and this is my reason for mentioning this Act—“this enactment proves that the welfare of the working classes was an object of solicitude to the legislature at that time.”² In the following year an Act³ was passed for apprenticing boys who, or whose parents, were chargeable to the parish, to the master or owner of any English ship until they were twenty-one years of age. In the same year we have an Act⁴ for “erecting a Workhouse and for setting the Poor on work in the City of Worcester.” This, from its provisions, was a very important Act, for it ordered that “the mayor and certain of the city authorities, with four persons to be annually chosen in each of the several parishes out of the ablest and discreetest inhabitants, shall be a corporation to continue for ever, under the designation of ‘The Guardians of the Poor of the City of Worcester.’”⁵ These Guardians are to relieve the poor of all the various parishes as if they were one parish; they may also contract with other parishes in the same county for receiving and setting their poor to work; they may provide all things necessary for this; they may compel beggars and idle people to come into the workhouse and set them to work there; also they may compel children found begging, or whose parents are chargeable, to do the same; and, then, when these children are fifteen years of age, they may bind them as apprentices.

Here we have something approaching the present-day work-

¹ 1 Anne, statute 2, cap. 22.

² Nicholls’ “History of the Poor Law,” i., p. 362.

³ 2 and 3 Anne, cap. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, cap. 8.

⁵ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

house, but with two great differences: First, the workhouse here described seems to have been arranged more for the purposes of police than as a means of relief; and, secondly, in this, as in all the original workhouses, work is provided with a view to profit—that is, in order to turn pauper labour to account. It is interesting to notice that already some misgivings of the effects of pauper labour upon free labour must have been felt, for in the thirtieth section of the Act it is provided that “no cloth or stuff, either woollen or linen, manufactured in the workhouse or houses of correction, shall be sold by retail within the City of Worcester or the liberties thereof.”¹ Consequently, goods made in the workhouse must either be used there or sold at a distance. But it does not seem to have struck those who framed the Act that these pauper-made goods would displace those made by free labour just as surely in one place as in any other.

In the sixth year of Queen Anne a similar Act² was passed for Plymouth, but with one very striking addition, which is again indicative of the spirit of the age. This Act orders the appointment of “some pious, sober, and discreet person, well qualified for a schoolmaster, who shall in some convenient room within the workhouse read daily morning and evening prayers at certain hours, to be for that purpose fixed and stated to the poor people and others belonging to the said workhouse; and also shall, by catechizing and otherwise, every Saturday in the afternoon, and upon holy days, instruct the poor children and other poor persons belonging to the said house in the fundamental parts of the Protestant religion, according to the doctrine of the Church of England; and shall teach every the said poor children to read and write and cast accompts.”³

In the tenth year of Queen Anne an Act⁴ was passed for Norwich, constituting “a corporation under the name of Guardians of the Poor for the City of Norwich.” In this, as in previous Acts, the chief object seems to have been to provide employment which would be remunerative; from which it must

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

² 6 Anne, cap. 46.

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

⁴ 10 Anne, cap. 15.

have been assumed that employment could not be obtained by the poor themselves. Evidently the truth that this kind of employment penalized the best class of workmen for the sake of the worst class was not yet recognized, no more, indeed, than has the same truth been recognized by those who to-day proclaim the doctrine of "the right to work." There is no other Act of this reign which seems to call for mention here.

I would now turn to what charity, apart from the State, was doing during this period. It was the time when the so-called "Religious Societies" flourished.¹ The history of these and their influence, especially as they inspired John Wesley² with the idea of the society which ultimately became so famous, should be studied; but it is only the philanthropic side of their activity that concerns us here. This was evidently extensive, for we are told that their members visited the poor in their homes and relieved them; they fixed some of these in various trades; they were instrumental in setting prisoners free; and they assisted in establishing nearly one hundred Charity Schools in London, besides others in various parts of the country.³ The Charity Schools,⁴ in which poor children, besides being taught, were lodged, fed, and clothed, were, like the religious societies, a creation and peculiar feature of this age. It is not certain to which of them belongs the honour of being first established, but, largely owing to the help afforded them by the S.P.C.K.,⁵ they multiplied rapidly. In 1704 there were fifty-four such schools in and around London, and 2,131 children were present at the first anniversary service. By 1712 the number of these schools had risen to 117 in London and Westminster, but, like everything else connected with religion, they suffered during the Georgian period.

Another movement at this time for the benefit of the poor was the erection of hospitals⁶ in the present sense of the term, and many of the hospitals situated in our great towns date from this period. Yet another method of assisting the poor then in

¹ See Overton, "Life in the English Church" (1660-1714), pp. 207 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 224 *et seq.*

⁵ This was founded in 1698.

⁶ Overton, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

vogue was by issuing "briefs" for collections on their behalf.¹ Taking all these various movements and methods into consideration, it must be admitted that during the opening years of the eighteenth century the spirit of Christian philanthropy was more than usually active. The work which was then done for the poor was actually the expression in practice of the very real and very considerable religious earnestness existing at that time.

With the death of Queen Anne we enter upon a very different phase of the Church's life. I will not here attempt to enter at length into the causes of the unhappy change which came over the religious spirit of the nation, and which, apart from a few brilliant exceptions—of individual men and women and in individual parishes—persisted for more than a hundred years. So far as it bears upon our present subject, I will deal with it in the next chapter. Perhaps the most peculiarly characteristic feature of the age was the remarkable absence of almost any form of self-sacrifice.² It may have been held that there was nothing specially to call for it; certainly among those in high places, both in Church and State, there were very few examples of it, and there were equally few exhortations towards it. In a very true sense the age was a "sordid" one.³ During its course there was a large amount of material prosperity,⁴ even if this was not generally diffused. Certainly the aggregate wealth of the nation largely increased, but at the same time, in another sphere, there was an even greater increase—one of moral and spiritual poverty.

There are few Acts of Parliament passed during the reign of George I. which claim attention here, though a study of those dealing with social matters throws much light on the condition of

¹ Overton, *op. cit.*, pp. 194 *et seq.* "Briefs" are really Royal Letters Patent for collections for special purposes.

² Which cannot exist apart from "enthusiasm." On the decline of missionary zeal, both home and foreign, see Abbey and Overton, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

³ One of the worst features of the age was the widespread and often shameless seeking for preferment.

⁴ Proofs of this will be given later.

the people at the time. More than one Act¹ was passed in the early years of the reign which was designed to prevent disorder. This evidently shows that a somewhat lawless spirit among the people was then prevalent. In 1718 an Act² was passed by which the property of persons deserting wives or children, whereby these became chargeable, was to be sold and the profit applied to their maintenance. Then, in 1720, a curious Act³ was passed forbidding "the wearing and using of printed, painted, stained, and dyed calicoes in apparel, household stuff, furniture, and otherwise," because this "does manifestly tend to the great detriment of the woollen and silk manufactures, and to the excessive increase of the poor, and if not prevented may be the utter ruin and destruction of the said manufactures and of many thousands whose livelihoods do entirely depend thereupon." This is only one instance of much restrictive legislation, whose shortsightedness and folly have been amply proved by experience. Ostensibly, some of this legislation was in the interests of the poor, but actually the protection of the existing interests of the manufacturers were not forgotten. In 1720 we have an Act⁴ which, because of its effect upon the spirit or temper, as well as upon the material welfare of the working classes (as detrimental to this), demands a more extended notice. The Act is entitled "For regulating Journeymen Tailors." I am going to quote from this Act because it so clearly reveals the point of view from which Parliament at that date—which we must remember was then entirely unrepresentative of the working classes—was inclined to approach any attempt on the part of these classes to improve their position. The Act states that "great numbers of journeymen tailors . . . and others who have served apprenticeships . . . have lately departed from their services without just cause and have entered into combinations to advance their wages to unreasonable prices and lessen their hours of work, which is of evil example." The Act then

¹ 1 George I., statute 2, cap. 5 (the "Riot Act," which is still in force); also 1 George I., cap. 11, and 6 George I., cap. 16.

² 5 George I., cap. 8.

³ 7 George I., cap. 7.

⁴ 7 George I., cap. 13.

declares that "all covenants or agreements between such persons for advancing their wages or for lessening their usual hours of work are illegal and void, and that every person offending therein is, on conviction, subjected to two months' imprisonment with hard labour." But the Act goes even farther than this : it prescribes the hours of work—from six in the morning until eight at night—and also the rate of wages, which from March 25 to June 24 are not to exceed two shillings a day, and for the rest of the year one shilling and eightpence.¹ It is the existence of such laws as this which explains the appalling conditions under which we find a large proportion of the working classes living for at least a century after this time. Such laws also go far to explain the attitude of these classes to the Church, which in those days was largely associated in their minds with the class represented in Parliament. This Act continued in force until 1768.

Two years later we have an Act² making general for the whole kingdom what had already been permitted in certain large towns—*i.e.*, that parishes might combine to erect workhouses and might "have the benefit of the labour of the poor." Also by this Act all persons declining to go into workhouses were no longer to be entitled to ask or receive relief from the churchwardens or overseers.³ From this and other Acts passed during this period it is quite clear that the problem of the relief of the poor was constantly becoming a more and more difficult one. We can also see how, from a want of foresight in those responsible for making the laws, evils, which came to a head a century later, were gradually accumulating. The permission to erect workhouses—especially with a view to deriving profit from the labour of their inmates—was widely adopted. Within a very few years more than a hundred were erected. Here, certainly, the seeds of future evils were being sown. The workhouse was more and more used as

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 10, 11.

² 9 George I., cap. 7. By this same Act (one of considerable importance) Justices were not to give relief without first communicating with the overseers. See Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 12 *et seq.*

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 14.

a manufactory in which, at the cost of the Poor Rate, the worst class of people—the dearest of all forms of labour—was being employed, and every increase of this kind of labour was an additional burden upon the best class of workers, who ultimately paid the cost. Here is another example of the future being mortgaged for the present.

Two years before the death of George I. the principle of the Act relating to “Journeyman Tailors” was enlarged so as to prevent “unlawful combinations of workmen employed in the woollen manufactures,” then apparently the chief existing industry, except, of course, agriculture. In this Act¹ we are told that “great numbers of weavers and others have lately entered into unlawful combinations to regulate the price of goods, to advance wages . . . and by force protected themselves and their wicked accomplices against law and justice.” “All covenants and by-laws for regulating the prices of goods, or advancing wages, or lessening the hours of work, are and shall be illegal and void.” Those who were guilty of contravening the provisions of this Act were very severely punished. We can easily see at what a disadvantage workmen were placed when it was absolutely illegal for them even to agree together and peaceably combine to obtain an increase of wages. Actually they were simply at the mercy of those who made the laws, and who did these represent? Certainly they did not in any sense of the word represent the working classes.

Because I want to make as clear as possible the causes of our own present so-called social difficulties, I am anxious, as far as I am able, to trace the origins and the developments of these. In the eighteenth century Parliament was in no sense of the word representative of the people. Towns like Manchester and Birmingham had no representatives; in Bath there were thirty-five voters. At the close of the eighteenth century, out of a population of 7,000,000 only 300,000 had votes. In the middle of the century Lord Lonsdale had nine “pocket” boroughs, the Duke of Norfolk had eleven, and the Duke of Newcastle could

¹ 13 George I., cap. 34. See Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 19 *et seq.*

practically nominate fifty members to the House of Commons.¹ Consequently there was legislation simply *for*² the people, but in no sense *by* the people. The working classes had no means of making their opinions heard, much less felt. The Church in its corporate capacity was in the same position. The Bishops in the House of Lords were the nominees of the Prime Minister, and, since Convocation was silenced in 1717, the voice of the Church, as a Church, was absolutely dumb. Then the stability of opinion in those days was far greater than at present, and consequently changes—whether in the nature of reforms or otherwise—were far less easily effected. In the earlier part of the eighteenth century the Whigs were almost continuously in office for forty-five years; and from 1769 to 1830 the Tories were almost as continuously in power. With both parties the landed interests, and especially those of the larger proprietors, were supreme.

The Acts of Parliament passed in the reign of George II., like those of the previous reign, are interesting chiefly for two reasons: First, as throwing light upon the actual social conditions prevailing at the time; and secondly, as indicating how those in authority thought that these conditions should be dealt with.

About the beginning of this reign there seems to have been formed a certain "charitable corporation for the relief of the industrious poor by assisting them with small sums upon pledges at legal interest." Sir George Nicholls thinks it probable that many worthy, if unwise, persons may have assisted in its formation. But eventually "it became worked for the benefit of a few designing men at the cost of their dupes and followers."³ The number of sufferers must have been considerable if two Acts⁴ of Parliament were necessary for appointing and amending a Commission for taking and determining all claims made by the creditors of this (so-called) "charitable corporation," and for requiring its promoters to appear before the Commissioners

¹ Warner and Marten, "The Groundwork of British History," p. 480.

² Though not in the sense of *for* their benefit.

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 23.

⁴ 5 George II., cap. 31, and 6 George II., cap. 2.

of Bankruptcy. The very possibility of the formation of a society or company for this purpose, or rather of getting a number of people to form such a company, shows a strange ignorance of the true methods of assisting "the industrious poor." The last thing we should wish these to possess is any further inducement to borrow "small sums upon pledges," for this is to destroy provident habits among them.

The evil conditions under which many of the people must have been living are revealed by more than one further Act¹ against robbery and violence. That this prevalence of disorder was in part due to these evil conditions (themselves due in some measure to iniquitous class legislation), is proved by the fact that at least a measure of this disorder arose through bounties being paid upon the export of corn. This exportation of corn at a premium was clearly to the advantage solely of the landed proprietors, and tended to make the food of the people both scarce in quantity and high in price.²

In 1740 was passed the Act³ by which the Foundling Hospital was incorporated. By this Act the governors are authorized "to receive, maintain, and educate all or as many children as they shall think fit;" further, no churchwarden or overseer is to stop or molest any person bringing such children; also the governors are "authorized to employ the children in any sort of labour or manufacture, or to hire or let out the labour of such children, or to bind them as apprentices to any person willing to take them."⁴ Here, again, we have an institution established (and a practice assisted) which is now recognized as actually increasing the evil which it was intended to diminish. Where no Poor Law exists there may be some excuse for the existence of foundling hospitals, but a Poor Law properly administered should provide for the really destitute, whether these be infants

¹ *E.g.*, 7 George II., cap. 21, and 11 George II., cap. 22.

² The winter of 1739-40 was exceptionally severe, and was followed by a very deficient harvest. Corn was sold in 1738 at 20s. 2d.; in 1740 it rose to 59s. The instability of prices, depending on the nature of the harvest at home, was in those days one of the great trials of the poor.

³ 13 George II., cap. 29.

⁴ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 27.

or adults. To have the two working side by side is not only an extravagance, it is an incitement towards an evil which it is in the true interests of society to check as far as it possibly can.

Other Acts which are indicative of the evil social conditions existing, and of the inability of those in authority to check them by the right measures, are certain cruel Acts¹ against various forms of stealing; and where stealing is rife it will generally be found that such poverty as implies actual hunger is at least common. In 1741 it was enacted that persons found guilty of stealing sheep "shall suffer death, as in cases of felony, without benefit of clergy." In the following year this penalty was extended to those stealing "any bull, cow, ox, steer, bullock, heifer, calf, and lamb, as well as sheep." The well-known Vagrancy Act of 1744²—which is still the basis of the law on that evil—also indicates a state of things for which it was deemed necessary to take strong measures. Lastly, in 1747³ the power of Justices of the Peace "to fix and determine the rate of wages" in all kinds of occupations was so far enlarged as to authorize them "to judge and determine whatever differences may arise between the employers and the employed, either with respect to wages or any other cause of complaint."

I have drawn attention to these various Acts—and their number might easily be enlarged—in order to show how generally the legislation of this period was in favour of a particular class—the class which was alone then represented in Parliament. Also I have shown that a very large proportion of this legislation was purely and simply repressive. There seem to have been very few attempts to remove the causes of the evils, which the very fact of the legislation itself shows were at least recognized. And, unfortunately, where we do find remedies proposed they are such as would tend to aggravate rather than cure the disease.

¹ 14 George II., cap. 6; 15 George II., cap. 27. Balleine, in the "History of the Evangelical Party," p. 10, states that at this time "there were 253 capital offences on the Statute Book."

² 17 George II., cap. 5. See Nicholls, *op. cit.*, ii., pp. 34 *et seq.*

³ By 20 George II., cap. 19.

It may be contended that we have no right to blame people for the results of a want of knowledge which they did not possess, that we ought not to condemn those who lived a hundred and fifty to two hundred years ago for being ignorant of sociological laws and of the action of sociological forces which were not then discovered. This may be true; at the same time the causes of poverty, and consequently of disorder and crime, might have been far better known at that time than they apparently were, and they might have evoked a much more general sympathy than they seem to have done. When we compare the solicitude for the poor shown by the Church in the early ages of Christianity, and (if not always wisely) during the greater part of the Middle Ages, with the apparent callousness towards their condition and their needs during the eighteenth century, we cannot hold the Church of that age guiltless. It must, of course, be remembered that since 1717, when Convocation was silenced, the Church had no official means of voicing its collective opinion. Also, the general character of the Bishops during the century, the qualifications for which they were appointed, and the line of policy or conduct they were expected to pursue, were all such as precluded them from being in any way active in social reform. To maintain quietness, in fact to do as little as possible, was the chief demand made upon them by Walpole and the Ministers associated with his particular line of policy. It was, too, the age of pluralities, and pluralities inevitably meant a large amount of non-residence,¹ which in turn meant ignorance of the real condition of the poor, and so inability to improve that condition. For the sake of the poor, we saw that the earlier Stuart Kings demanded the residence of noblemen and squires upon their estates; the earlier Hanoverians did not demand even the residence of the clergy. Whatever may have been the causes of it, this is certain, that when the Industrial Revolution began, about the middle of the

¹ A Bishop of Llandaff was at the same time Rector of nine parishes in England and seven in Wales, while he himself resided in Westmorland (*Balleine, op. cit.*, p. 11).

century, the Church of England proved herself to be hopelessly unequal to meeting the demands which that great change in the economic and social conditions of life produced. From the results of a dereliction of her duty, which can only be called appalling, during the first eighty or even hundred years of the course of the Revolution, the Church is still suffering to-day. Individuals, both clergy and lay people, here and there did excellent work in their immediate neighbourhoods, but, as a whole, the Church ignored the true needs and the just claims of the poor. Consequently the Church alienated the poor, and from the effects of that alienation the Church has never entirely recovered. Undoubtedly the most difficult task before the Church at the present time—a task which has been bravely and widely undertaken—is to prove to the poor that she does care for them; that not only is she in sympathy with their legitimate aims, but that she is ready to do all in her power to further these.

In the next chapter I shall deal with the opening years of the Industrial Revolution, but before doing so it may be well to state a few facts concerning the conditions which then existed, for, apart from some knowledge of these as a background to our picture, it will be impossible to understand what actually did take place.

Roughly speaking, the population of England and Wales in 1700 was 6,000,000, and in 1750 was 6,500,000;¹ but in 1801 it was nearly 9,000,000, in 1811 it was over 10,000,000, while in 1851 it was no less than 17,900,000. In other words, the rate of increase during the second half of the eighteenth century was five times as rapid as during the first half, while during the first half of the nineteenth century it was eighteen times as rapid as during the first half of the eighteenth

¹ There is some difference of opinion on this figure. Sir G. Nicholls places it at 7,000,000. See also Thorold Rogers, "The Economic Interpretation of History," pp. 55 *et seq.* Of the general increase of national prosperity during the first half of the eighteenth century there are abundant proofs. See Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 53 *et seq.*; also Meredith, "Economic History," pp. 231 *et seq.*

century. But this increase of population was not spread evenly over the entire country; it was largely confined to certain somewhat limited areas, especially to the coal and manufacturing districts of the North and the Midlands, and more especially to the large towns within these.¹ But trade increased even more rapidly than population. In 1700 it is calculated that the trade of the United Kingdom (imports and exports) worked out at £1 2s. 6d. per head; in 1750 it was £2 14s. per head; in 1800 it was £4 4s.; and in 1850 it was £6 10s. But this must not be held to imply that everybody became better off; on the contrary, with the increase of aggregate wealth we find a startling increase in the aggregate amount of poverty. The amount raised for the Poor Rate at the death of Queen Anne has been estimated at £950,000 a year; in 1776 it had risen to £1,500,000; in 1785 it was more than £2,000,000; in 1802 it was £4,000,000. Thus, while in a century, in round figures, the population had increased by half as much again, the amount raised for the Poor Rate had become quadrupled; or, to put it in another way, while at the beginning of the eighteenth century the cost of poor relief was about 4s. per head per annum of the population, at the end of the century it was nearly 9s. These figures show what an enormous increase in poverty had taken place; and when we pursue our investigation into the early years of the nineteenth century, we shall find an even greater increase.²

But probably by far the most fertile source of the various social evils which flourished during the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first two quarters of the nineteenth was an immense change which gradually took place in public opinion—a change which intimately affected every sphere of national life. Briefly, this change was the acceptance of the

¹ In 1760 probably not one of our largest manufacturing towns—Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield—contained more than 35,000 people; to-day the population of the smallest of these is ten times that amount. In 1750 Lancashire had 156 people to the square mile; in 1881 it contained 1,813 people to the square mile.

² In 1813 the cost of relief rose to £6,656,106, and in 1818 to £7,870,000.

doctrine of an almost unlimited individualism as the rule of conduct. This came to imply nothing less than the right of each individual to make the utmost of his opportunities, irrespective of the cost of his doing so to other people, especially of those poorer and weaker than himself. The growth, and the consequences of the translation into practice, of this doctrine—that generally known as *laissez-faire*—must be the subject of the next two chapters.

XI.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION—I.

IN studying the Industrial Revolution and its effects, two classes of facts must be studied side by side. Both may be regarded as parallel and contemporaneous causes : the first of the actual revolution, the second rather of the evils which accompanied it. In the first class I would place the great physical and material changes which commenced about the middle of the eighteenth century, and among these we must put the discovery of certain mechanical inventions whose effect in the way of increased production it is difficult to overestimate.¹ In 1760 the Bridgewater Canal was constructed ; this introduced a means whereby the cheap transit of heavy materials such as coal became possible. In 1764 Hargreaves produced his "spinning jenny"; in 1765 Watt invented the steam engine; in 1767-70 Arkwright produced his "water-frame," which practically necessitated the factory or mill. In 1775 he took out a second patent "which enabled him to co-ordinate the processes of carding, drawing, roving, and spinning. He was now able to send raw cotton into his factory and bring out thread, almost the whole work being done by machinery."² In 1779 Crompton invented the "mule," which produced a thread at once fine and strong. In 1785 Cartwright produced the power loom, and as early as 1789 steam was applied. I give these examples from a single branch of industry—the cotton trade. In other textile industries—for instance, in connection

¹ There were, of course, earlier inventions—*e.g.*, Kay's "flying shuttle," about 1730; and ten years after this there was a spinning mill at Northampton. There was also Savery's "fire engine," used early in the century to clear mines of water.

² Meredith's "Economic History of England," p. 246.

with the use of coal, with the production of iron and steel, and in various branches of mechanical engineering—during the same period similar inventions were being made and employed.¹ We are, of course, now dealing only with the early days of the Industrial Revolution, for actually the movement so described has never ended. It still continues, and from the time of which we are speaking down to the present day discovery has followed discovery, and one invention has succeeded another with ever increasing rapidity; while the almost innumerable applications, first of steam, then of electricity, and lastly of petrol, have enabled these inventions to be applied in a constantly widening sphere. It must be remembered that these various inventions at least synchronized with other changes—rapid increases in population, in trade, also in the aggregate wealth of the nation. The inventions may have, at least to some extent, been due to the pressure exerted by the growth of population and trade; and certainly it was the increase of wealth, that is of available capital, which made their application so widely possible.

All these various changes—in methods of production, and in large increases of population, trade, and the aggregate national wealth—are facts belonging to the category of the physical and the material.

The second class of facts to which I just now referred are those connected with the equipment of both the Church and the State at this time to deal with the new social problems which arose in consequence of these immense changes. This equipment should have been twofold: first, in the sphere of ideas, that is of thought, or doctrine, or principles (for ideas are the motive and ruling powers of conduct); secondly, in the sphere

¹ There was, of course, in the last half of the eighteenth century an immense improvement in the methods of agriculture. Partly by means of these, Coke raised the rent of his Holkham estate from £2,200 in 1776 to £20,000 in 1818. (Meredith, *op. cit.*, p. 244.)

Also immense tracts of land were enclosed, as much as 7,000,000 acres between 1760 and 1843; small farms gave place to large ones; cultivation became more and more scientific; the rural population became not only relatively, but actually smaller. See Toynbee's "Industrial Revolution," pp. 67 *et seq.*, 206 *et seq.*

of organization, which is the chief means or instrument whereby any political or religious body is able to carry out and propagate its ideas. Actually we find in the middle of the eighteenth century, on the part of both Church and State, very inadequate views of their responsibilities, and consequently a very inadequate discharge of their duties. These inadequate views were due to equally inadequate conceptions of the true nature of both man and society, and also of the responsibilities to both on the part of those who are in authority.

It is impossible for me even to sketch in outline either the theological and philosophical, or the political and social, ideas which were chiefly prevalent at that time. The Church was certainly not wanting in men of very considerable intellectual power.¹ She had thinkers who might have set forth the New Testament conception of the supreme value of the individual life, also of the responsibilities both of the individual to society and of society to the individual. But the religious teachers of that time were otherwise engaged. In the earlier part of the century they were occupied in vanquishing the Deists,² and at intervals throughout it they were busy with the Trinitarian controversy.³ The work they did was useful in its way;⁴ those who attack the Faith must be answered. But controversy is not the only, it is not even the chief, duty of the leaders of the Church. One of the principal causes of the failure of the teachers of that time was their constant insistence upon the "prudential" aspect of religion.⁵ They were always dwelling upon the "reasonableness" of Christianity; they were content to point out how "expedient" a belief in it was. There was no teaching of the responsibility for man as man—that is, for man redeemed by Christ. The truth, that by the Incarnation

¹ This was especially so in the early part of the eighteenth century.

² On the "Deists," see Abbey and Overton, "The English Church in the Eighteenth Century," chap. iii.

³ "On the Trinitarian Controversy," *ibid.*, chap. vi.

⁴ Then, as so often, the "apologists" made the road for the so-called "more spiritual" teachers who followed them.

⁵ This may be said to be equally prominent in such otherwise different teachers as Butler and Paley.

man's physical and material welfare, as affecting his spiritual welfare, must be a matter of concern to the Christian, seems to have been entirely forgotten. Then there was no sense of the *corporate* life of the Church, of her corporate responsibility towards the ignorant, the poor, and the oppressed.

The current philosophy and ethics of the time were as inadequate as its theology. Hobbes, whose influence upon thought was still strong, held something very like "the natural unsociality of man,"¹ and that, "since all the voluntary actions of men tend to their own preservation or pleasure, it cannot be reasonable to aim at anything else."² There is nothing very lofty in Locke's reason why one man should not hurt another—viz., "because the person is another man—that is, an animal related to us by nature whom it would be criminal to harm."³ Bishop Butler was certainly a great ethical teacher, yet it can hardly be denied that he assumes that the ultimate appeal must be to the individual's interest. Also he seems to admit that, should the dilemma arise in which "reasonable self-love" and conscience should come into conflict, conscience would have to give way, because "our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us."⁴ Hume regarded justice, veracity, and fidelity to compacts as "artificial" virtues, due to civilization, and that our approbation of them is founded upon our perception of their useful consequences.⁵

Burke was in some respects a really great statesman, but we cannot acquit him of teaching political expediency; and when he regarded revealed religion as something not entirely different from an "adventitious" addition to natural religion, he was only echoing the prevailing conception of his age. As Professor Maurice says: "Burke was the masterly investigator of a *nation's* constitution, of a *nation's* obligation." He was at the same time "the masterly protester against every attempt to merge this constitution and these obligations in some general

¹ Sidgwick, "History of Ethics," p. 164.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁴ Sermon xi.

⁵ Sidgwick, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

theory which concerned all men equally.”¹ But Burke apparently gives no answer to the question whether “there was not a conscience which demanded that if the multitude were swine, they should not be left as swine; whether there was not food, and that the highest food of all, for which they had powers of digestion, for which they might also have an appetite?” To quote Professor Maurice again: “Burke could give his aid in extinguishing what was false. . . . He could bid them cast away nothing that had been given them, and expect nothing from what they created out of their own fancies. He could *not* show that there is not a city for men which hath [the] foundations, nor that all the cities of the old world and the new are not to walk in the light of it.”² The doctrine of “expediency” is even more clearly taught by Paley, who held that it “is the one foundation of moral and political philosophy.” To him “moral obligation means a motive which is ‘violent’ enough to produce obedience to it. There is no motive sufficiently violent but a self-interest which stretches through an interminable future.”³ Paley thought Hume right “in supposing that justice and benevolence have no foundation except in utility.” But he thought Hume wrong “in fancying that a sufficient sense of what is useful, and therefore a sufficient motive to be just and benevolent, could be created in men’s minds unless they were promised enormous future rewards, if they were just and benevolent, and were threatened with punishment of unmeasured magnitude and duration if they were not.”⁴ After considering the teaching of Paley, I ought to have proceeded to deal with that of Bentham and the Utilitarians, but these, so far as their practical influence is concerned, belong to a later period of the Industrial Revolution than that which I am now examining.

¹ “Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy,” vol. ii., p. 595.

² *Ibid.*, p. 596.

³ “While Burke was working out his ideas of a nation’s expediency by hard practical conflicts with its pride and avarice, William Paley was teaching, in the halls of Cambridge, that expediency is the one foundation of moral and political philosophy (Maurice, *op. cit.*, p. 596). ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

I have entered somewhat fully into the theological and philosophical teaching of the eighteenth century, because, apart from the ideas which were generally accepted at the time, it is impossible to understand adequately the conduct of either rulers or churchmen in reference to the changes that were taking place, or rather to the social evils which were rapidly growing in magnitude.

But, as I have said, besides considering the ideas or principles accepted in any period, we have to consider the organization then available in Church and State for applying these. In the Church at this time there was practically nothing to which the term "organization" could be applied. Since the silencing of Convocation in 1717¹ there had been absolutely no assembly through which the Church, as a corporate body, could utter her collective opinion, had she wished to do so. Such gatherings as diocesan conferences were unknown. The very size of some of the northern dioceses, especially when we remember the means of locomotion in those days, precluded any collective gathering of clergy except upon the rarest occasions. In the Northern Province, apart from Sodor and Man, there were but four dioceses—York, Durham, Carlisle, and Chester; even part of the Archdeaconry of Richmond in North-West Yorkshire was then in the Diocese of Chester. Probably the last qualification for an aspirant to a bishopric in the days of Walpole would have been organizing ability. Again, "what would now be considered the most ordinary parts of parochial machinery were then wanting. . . . The population of the country had far outgrown the resources of the National Church, even if her ministers had been as energetic as they were generally the reverse, and there were no voluntary societies for home missions to supply the defects of the parochial machinery. . . . Beyond the personal influence which a clergyman might exercise over his friends and

¹ In the years preceding this Convocation had been doing much good work (see Abbey and Overton, "The English Church in the Eighteenth Century," pp. 283 *et seq.*). On the causes which led to the silencing of Convocation, see "A History of the English Church" (Macmillans), vol. vii., pp. 16 *et seq.*

dependants in his parish . . . his clerical work consisted solely in reading the services and preaching on Sundays."¹

The political organization of the time, so far as this was available for translating any ideas into practical measures for the welfare of the people, was, compared with what we possess to-day, extremely inefficient. Parliament did not in any sense represent the people. Even such changes towards this as were affected by the First Reform Act² were as yet three-quarters of a century in the future. Large and growing centres of trade and population, as Manchester and Birmingham, were, as we have seen, without a single representative. Then we must remember that it was illegal for workpeople to combine with a view to improving their financial condition.³

Thus, in the middle of the eighteenth century—that is, when the Industrial Revolution began—there was, both in Church and State, at once a singular absence of lofty ideas for the betterment of the people, whether spiritually or materially, and also of any organization for propagating these.

This was specially unfortunate, because at that time the material condition of the poorer classes, if far from satisfactory, was actually better than it had been previously. This is proved by the fact that a larger amount of the necessities of life were obtainable for the same amount of labour.⁴ "It was during the rule of Walpole that the seeds of our commercial greatness were gradually ripened. It was evidently the most prosperous season that England had ever experienced."⁵ How very different the condition of great masses of the poorest people became as the Industrial Revolution proceeded will be seen only too clearly. The terrible thought to us must be that the frightful social and also moral evils which accumulated towards the end of the eighteenth century, and grew greater and greater

¹ Abbey and Overton, "The English Church in the Eighteenth Century," p. 299.

² That of 1832.

³ This had been prohibited so long ago as 1548 by 2 and 3 Edward VI., cap. 15; also in 1720 by 7 George I., cap. 13; in 1725 by 13 George I., cap. 34; and in 1749 by 22 George II., cap. 27. On the "Combination Act" of 1800, see Dicey, "Law and Opinion," pp. 95 *et seq.*

⁴ Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. ii., pp. 55 *et seq.*

⁵ Hallam, "Constitutional History of England," vol. iii., pp. 301, 302.

until far into the nineteenth, ought never to have been allowed to do so.¹ The causes of these evils should have been checked nearly a century before they actually were so. As Dr. Arnold once wrote of the period of which we are speaking : "All the evils of society were yet manageable ; while complete political freedom and a vigorous state of mental activity seemed to promise that the growth of good would more than keep pace with them, and that thus they might be kept down for ever. But tranquillity, as usual, bred carelessness ; events were left to take their own way uncontrolled ; the weeds grew fast, while none thought of saving the good seed."²

The chief thing to remember—indeed, the real key to the situation which arose at the end of the eighteenth century—is that the policy of non-intervention, *i.e.* the belief in this as a working principle, became more and more firmly fixed.³ During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the opposite policy had prevailed. The State had interfered everywhere. It had attempted to regulate conduct in almost every department of life. For instance, it had fixed both the amount of wages and the prices at which goods were to be bought and sold ; it had imposed duties on imports and bounties on exports. But with the new conditions, that is with the new power which invention had put into the hands of capable and energetic men, with the great increase of capital, with the opening up of new markets for goods which could be rapidly produced and sold at a large profit—with the coming of all these, all kinds of restrictions and regulations were felt to be unbearable. Men demanded freedom for each man to develop his own business in the way most profitable to himself, to make the utmost of his resources,⁴ and

¹ "The more we examine the actual course of affairs, the more we are amazed at the unnecessary suffering which has been inflicted upon the people" (Toynbee, "The Industrial Revolution," p. 35).

² Quoted by Dicey, "Law and Opinion in England," pp. 76, 77.

³ The gradual acceptance of the doctrine of *laissez faire*, until for a time it became almost unchallenged, is the chief of all the keys to the economic history and to the social evils of the period which stretches from about 1790 until almost 1870. On the doctrine of *laissez faire* and its results, see Toynbee, "Industrial Revolution," pp. 158 *et seq.*

⁴ Upon how political theory in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was governed by considerations of trade, see Hertz, "The Manchester Politician," chaps. i.-iv.

also to use to the full the new opportunities which were constantly opening out.

Adam Smith, in his celebrated book, "The Wealth of Nations," which first appeared in 1776, gathered up and expressed with considerable clearness the thoughts and convictions of the time. Largely because he wrote, not for the philosopher, but for the practical statesman and the man of affairs, and just because his teaching so exactly agreed with what these latter saw would be to their advantage, his book from the first attained very considerable authority, and for certainly not less than three-quarters of a century its principles were generally accepted. The two fundamental ideas of "The Wealth of Nations" are "the belief in the supreme value of individual liberty, and the conviction that Man's self-love is God's providence, that the individual in pursuing his own interest is promoting the welfare of all."¹ Put together, these principles imply that all that is needed for prosperity is to give scope to every man to work out his own welfare, according to the dictates of self-interest. The almost universal acceptance of the truth of this thesis is the essential key to understanding the economic conditions and the social evils which rapidly developed, and which persisted for at least three-quarters of a century. How very untrue the thesis actually is, the appalling misery suffered by multitudes of the poorer and weaker members of the community during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the harvest of social evils (largely arising from this misery) from which we are still suffering to-day, are more than sufficient proof. Conduct is ultimately governed by ideas, and if we want a striking instance of the necessity of right thinking, and also of the dangers of accepting a false doctrine of man, and a false doctrine of society, we certainly have it in the results of accepting the teaching of Adam Smith and David Ricardo.²

¹ Toynbee, "Industrial Revolution," p. 148. With Adam Smith's influence must, of course, be associated that of David Ricardo, who was born four years before "The Wealth of Nations" was published, and whose influence was at its height from about 1817 onwards.

² "Ricardo's economic assumptions were of his own making . . . his philosophical assumptions were derived from Adam Smith, whose intellectual

One factor which most injuriously affected the poor during the first seventy-five years of the Industrial Revolution was due to the nation being throughout this period almost continuously at war. Then, as always, war meant three things: First, it meant that thought, energy, and money, which might have been devoted to the improvement of the social condition of the people, were expended upon the war; secondly, it meant an enormous increase in taxation, the heaviest burden of which then, as is usually the case, fell upon the poorer classes; thirdly, it meant an immense rise in price of all the necessities of life. From 1755 to 1764 the average price of corn was 37s. 6d.; from 1765 to 1774 it was 51s.—a rise of 35 per cent.;¹ in 1782 it was 53s. 9½d.; in 1795 it was 81s. 6d.² There was also a very considerable rise in other classes of provisions and also in rent.³

The first hundred years of the Industrial Revolution was a period during which there seems to have been an unusual amount of oppression of the poor and the weak by the rich and the strong. There were at least two reasons for this: First, the opportunities for amassing wealth were unusually great, and consequently the temptation to use these to the full, even at the cost of a practically unlimited exploitation of the workers, was proportionately great;⁴ secondly, owing to the prevalence of inadequate and un-Christian views of both man and society—though their un-Christianity was not clearly recognized—men who had no actual wish to do wrong were prevented from seeing the real iniquity of their conduct.⁵ Among the most fertile of all the causes of the ineffectiveness of religion and of the failure of Christianity to make the progress which it should, has always been a contradiction between the opinions professed and the

position he accepted in the main without question" (Toynbee, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 148).

¹ These figures are from Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 74.

² Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 82. For the further great rise during the war with France see the next chapter.

³ Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 72 and 108.

⁴ This was especially the case in regard to pauper child-labour.

⁵ See quotations from Lord Shaftesbury's private diary on the conduct of such men as Gladstone and John Bright (over the "Ten Hours" Bill), quoted by Dicey, "Law and Opinion," pp. 231 *et seq.* See Professor Bennett's

conduct pursued by men calling themselves Christians. This contradiction was then more glaring than usual ; but at the same time we must remember that this was at least partly due to a very imperfect conception of what Christianity involved. This defective conception not only prevented the ordinary layman from acting as a Christian ; it prevented even clergymen, otherwise earnest, from speaking, as the old Hebrew Prophets would have spoken, of the iniquity of oppressing the poor.

The moral standard at the close of the reign of George II. was, among all classes of society, but especially among the richest and poorest, extremely low. I need not stay to prove this statement, for the evidence is only too abundant. Among the richest class there was great extravagance, especially in the way of gambling ; drunkenness pervaded all classes ; the so-called amusements of the people generally consisted in wild scenes of vulgar debauchery, frequently descending into nothing less than brutal violence.¹ With the accession of George III. the moral tone of the Court certainly improved, and to some slight extent this affected the tone of society generally ; but the improvement was far from what it should have been, and for nearly a century after this time the moral standard, especially among the poor, was deplorably low. It has been asserted that during this time the clergy set a distinctly bad example ; the charge has even been made that there was widespread immorality among them. For this charge there appears to be very little justification. Their greatest failing seems to have been a really culpable inactivity in discharging the responsibilities of their office. Their faults

essay on Social Ideals in the Old Testament in "Christ and Civilization," pp. 49 *et seq.*

¹ "The mania for gambling in all forms pervaded society ; ladies did their shopping where with every purchase they were given a ticket for a raffle. . . . The picture of the under-side of life in England during the second quarter of the eighteenth century is appalling. . . . In 1750 London physicians reported 14,000 cases of illness, most of them hopeless, due to the use of gin. . . . Every sixth house in London was a gin-shop. . . . Throughout the country things were little better. . . . Wherever any form of industry called together large numbers of ignorant, unskilled workmen, the restraints of orderly society were almost entirely removed. . . . Philanthropy was hopeless of them. The Church seemed powerless to take religion to them " (Winchester, "Life of John Wesley" pp. 73 *et seq.*).

were chiefly those of omission. They failed to do their duty, and therefore to be an influence for good among their people, who in consequence sank lower and lower into moral deterioration, and not infrequently into profligacy and crime.

I have thought it well to describe at some length the actual conditions which existed at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, because, apart from a knowledge of these, it is impossible to understand either the actual course which the Revolution pursued or its many evil social results. The causes of the unhappy condition of the poorest classes of the population in our great towns to-day, and the reasons for the present attitude of these classes towards organized Christianity, can be clearly traced back to the evil course which the Industrial Revolution—so far as the poorest and most helpless part of the people was concerned—was allowed to take. And it was allowed to take this course very largely because there was in those who at that time should have done something to form public opinion a totally inadequate conception of Christian doctrine, and consequently an equally inadequate discharge of Christian duty.

There is one movement belonging to the eighteenth century which no one who wishes to describe the relations between the Church and the Poor during that period can possibly ignore. The "Evangelical Movement" was primarily neither social nor economic, yet indirectly it had certain undoubtedly important social and economic consequences. It profoundly affected the moral characters of those who were strongly influenced by it. Because it taught them to live as Christians, it taught them not only to do their duty to God, but also to themselves and to their neighbours.¹ Because it was a warfare against all forms of *sin*, it could not fail to be a warfare against vices which had a most deleterious influence upon the social and economic welfare of the people. In those days, as in these, a great proportion of the misery from which the poor suffered was self-inflicted.

¹ In this connection we must remember William Wilberforce's "Practical View," published in 1797, and which had an enormous circulation.

Then, as now, intemperance and other vices were among the chief causes of poverty and social misery. We who look back upon the Evangelical Movement, and to whom its results (or want of these) are known, can see where it failed to be the power which it might have been. We can see great gaps in its theology. We can see the narrowness of some of its conceptions of Christian truth, and consequently its failure to affect certain spheres of Christian life and duty. We can see its failure to grasp the idea of the Christian Society, and therefore its failure to teach the individual Christian his social responsibilities. We can see its failure to understand and therefore to teach the "sacramental" character (in the true sense of the term) of both Christian life and Christian conduct. It did not understand that the physical or the "material" was at least one channel of the spiritual; it did not realize the effects of the physical—in the most comprehensive meaning of the word—upon the spiritual life; it did not realize the deleterious influence upon character of the want of sufficient food and a healthy dwelling, and of at least a "living wage";¹ in short, it did not teach clearly the need of the sanctification of the physical² to the highest ends and purposes. It did not put the doctrine of the Incarnation in its true relation to the doctrine of the Atonement. It failed to comprehend, and therefore to teach, the essential unity of all life. It did not insist with sufficient clearness upon the essential connection of the life of this world with that of "the world to come." Some, but by no means all, of its leaders were open to the charge of teaching a conception of the Atonement and of the "Plan of Salvation" which at least savoured of the mechanical, and so was in danger of becoming *unmoral*. But when we have admitted all this, we cannot fail to see that the movement had far-reaching consequences for good. The effects of Wesley's preaching upon the moral lives of the people were

¹ When life is a perpetual struggle to maintain a bare physical existence, there is little or no energy left for thought upon higher things.

² In the light of present controversy I prefer to use the term "physical" rather than "material."

enormous, especially among the lower middle classes,¹ though probably not to the same degree among the poorest of the poor. It has been held—and not without a measure of truth—that it was largely owing to the influence of Wesley and his co-workers that there was no movement in England at the end of the eighteenth century corresponding to the Revolution in France.

I cannot here attempt to sketch the history of the Evangelical Movement even in barest outline,² but a few dates may help to put it into the right connection with other movements and events. John Wesley began his great preaching campaign in Bristol in 1739, and about the same time Whitfield and Charles Wesley began the work in London; in 1742 Grimshaw went to Haworth; in 1746 Samuel Walker became curate of Truro; in 1749 Romaine was preaching in London; in 1759 Henry Venn left Clapham for Huddersfield; in 1760 Fletcher went to Madeley; and in 1764 John Newton was curate of Olney.

When we examine the records of the work which these men accomplished, we find abundant evidence of a generally philanthropic spirit at work, side by side with their passion for saving souls.³ In their several parishes they attacked drunkenness and immorality, and they did all they could to assuage suffering due to poverty and sickness. Grimshaw would personally clear the public-houses of tipplers on a Sunday morning;⁴ Venn was even greater in his dealing with individuals—in the strong sanctified common sense which he brought to bear upon the difficulties of “weavers and shepherds”—than he was in his pulpit ministrations;⁵ the effect upon the moral life of the seaport of Hull from

¹ At times Wesley was intensely practical. He refused to preach at St. Ives so long as his hearers took part in smuggling; he absolutely forbade bribery at the Bristol election, and this at a time when “everybody” smuggled and “everybody” bribed. See Winchester’s “Life of Wesley,” pp. 213, 214.

² The histories of the movement are numerous—e.g., Balleine’s “History of the Evangelical Party,” and Canon Overton’s “The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century.”

³ Reliance upon works was indeed one of the errors against which they chiefly preached; the doctrine of the hymn “Rock of Ages” was their doctrine, and the vanity of secular learning and charitable works their theme . . . yet they owed their prominence “[at any rate, in the early years of the nineteenth century] to their activity in philanthropic movements” (“The English Church in the Nineteenth Century,” F. W. Cornish, p. 9).

⁴ Balleine, p. 48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

the preaching of Joseph Milner was enormous ;¹ at Truro, owing to the influence of Walker, the cockpit and the theatre had to close their doors ;² Fletcher had six Sunday-schools in different parts of his great parish,³ while at Creaton Thomas Jones commenced both a sick club and a clothing club.⁴ Then the philanthropy of the so-called Clapham sect—that is, of John Thornton, Henry Thornton,⁵ William Wilberforce, and others—must not be forgotten. It was William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton who found the means for the wonderful work which Hannah More did among the children in the villages of the Mendips.⁶

All this being so, the question may naturally be asked, Why was not the philanthropic work of these men more effective? Why had it not a wider and more lasting influence?⁷ Why did it apparently so little to stem the flood of misery—and not only of misery, but of vice and degradation—which poured over England, and especially over the large towns and manufacturing districts in the last years of the eighteenth century and far into the nineteenth? The chief reason was that their philanthropy, like their theology and their religion, was largely individualistic. They were most assiduous in trying to relieve the individual cases of poverty which came to their notice. But except in what they did for education (in their purely spiritual capacity), the leaders of the Evangelical School do not seem to have grasped the necessity for attacking *causes*. They do not appear to have realized that the relationships of society—those between rich and poor—were then fundamentally wrong. Doubtless their political economy was that of their age, and apparently they did not see that, as this was utterly un-Christian in theory, consequently it must be so in practice.⁸ They cannot have realized that charity, however

¹ Balleine, pp. 53, 54. ² *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 66. ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-62. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁵ In four years, 1790-1793, Henry Thornton gave in charity £20,408, while in the same years all his other expenses were less than £7,000.

⁶ Upon this work see Balleine, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 104.

⁷ I except, of course, the fight against the Slave Trade, and the (much later) work of Lord Shaftesbury, *vide* the following paragraph.

⁸ The way in which Christian leaders—*e.g.*, Whitfield and Newton—took part in the Slave Trade is a striking example. See Balleine, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 101.

lavishly bestowed upon individuals, was no substitute for the oppression of one class by another. They did not see the futility of palliating the sufferings of individuals while, by an iniquitous social and economic system, poverty and every kind of attendant degradation were being multiplied.¹ Historical parallels are proverbially dangerous. But the methods of philanthropy pursued by the Evangelicals towards the end of the eighteenth century were far nearer to the methods pursued in the Middle Ages than they were to those of either Calvin or of the men who did so much to make the Poor Law effective in the reign of Charles I. But both Calvin (though not in the ordinary acceptation of the term) and the advisers of Charles I. were "High" Churchmen—that is, they had a lofty sense of the reality of the Christian community, and therefore of the necessity of bringing statesmanship to bear upon the welfare of the community as a whole.

I am here, of course, speaking of the earlier Evangelicals. I am not referring to the men who were instrumental in the abolition of the Slave Trade, nor to those who, like T. F. Buxton and Lord Ashley (afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury), belonged to what has been termed the "third generation." These men had a far wider conception of philanthropy; they saw that oppression and poverty could not be attacked satisfactorily by individuals as individuals seeking to deal with individual cases. They saw that the conscience of the nation must be roused, and that the nation's rulers must be compelled to corporate action on behalf of the national welfare. But the work of these men does not belong to the period with which I have dealt in this chapter—the first five-and-twenty years of the reign of George III.; it belongs rather to the early years of the nineteenth century.

In the next chapter I hope to deal more particularly with the period which stretches from the close of the American War to the years immediately following the Battle of Waterloo.

¹ Many of the Evangelical laymen were keen business men. The connection between keen competition in business and individualism in religion is worthy of study.

XII.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION—II.

DURING the first twenty-five years of the reign of George III. many Acts of Parliament having reference to the poor were passed, though none of them except that known as "Gilbert's Act" is of outstanding importance. In 1761 it was enacted¹ that a register be kept of all infants under four years of age who shall be in, or shall be brought to, any workhouse, hospital, or other place provided for the maintenance of the poor, or shall be under the care of the churchwardens and overseers. Six years later it was ordered² that all children under the age of six who shall be in any workhouses, etc., shall, within fourteen days, be sent into the country to a distance of not less than three miles from any parts of the cities of London and Westminster. By the same Act it is enjoined that in order to guard against all dangerous consequences which may arise to the said children from false parsimony, negligence, inadvertency, or the annual change of parish officers, five noblemen and gentlemen, inhabitants of each parish, shall be appointed and chosen, under the title of "Guardians³ of the Parish Poor Children." They are to be in office for three years, and are to visit and inform themselves fully of the condition of these children, and, in case of neglect, are to inform a Justice of the Peace, who is empowered to give such orders as he shall think proper. These Acts show a much more tender solicitude for

¹ By 2 George III., cap. 22. (This Act, like the following, was limited to the Metropolis.)

² By 7 George III., cap. 39.

³ Is this the first instance of the term in this connection?

the welfare of young children than was evinced some fifty years later, when, by the multiplication of factories, there was an enormously increased demand for child labour, a demand which the Guardians of those days did not hesitate to supply under conditions which it is impossible to condemn too strongly. In 1773 an Act¹ was passed "for the better regulation of lying-in hospitals," by which it was ordered that a licence must be obtained from the Justices in Quarter Sessions before such a hospital could be established. Also about this time² the Journeymen Tailors Act was so amended that the scale of wages was raised by about a third. The immediate cause of this was a rapid rise of food prices, occasioned to some extent by several deficient harvests, and producing not only discontent, but even disturbances among the poor.

It was in 1782 that "Gilbert's Act"³ was passed. This Act removed the duty of relieving the poor from the churchwardens and overseers, whose duties were now restricted to collecting and accounting for the Poor Rate. For the future in all parishes which adopted the Act the entire management and control of the poor is delegated to "Visitors" and "Guardians," together with the Justices of the district. The Guardian for each parish is nominated by the parishioners and elected by the Justices;⁴ he is to receive a salary,⁵ and do all the duties of the overseer except collect the rate. The Visitor is also to be appointed by the Justices out of the number of the Guardians, and his authority in all matters connected with the workhouse is to be practically absolute. The two most important sections of the Act are the 29th and the 32nd. The 29th section enjoins "that no person shall be sent to the poorhouse except such as

¹ 13 George III., cap. 82.

² 8 George III., cap. 17. See Nicholls' "History of the Poor Law," vol. ii., pp. 71 *et seq.*

³ 22 George III., cap. 83. On this important measure, see Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 83 *et seq.*

⁴ The tendency to give more powers to the Justices is very apparent about this period.

⁵ He was thus very much in the position of the present relieving officer.

are become indigent by old age, sickness, or infirmities, and are unable to acquire a maintenance by their labour ; except such orphan children as are sent thither by order of the Guardians of the Poor." These classes could hardly be otherwise treated. But it was the 32nd section which ultimately proved so disastrous both to the welfare and the character of the poor. This section enjoined "that where there shall be in any parish, township, or place, any poor person or persons who shall be able and willing to work, but who cannot get employment, the Guardian of the Poor of such parish, etc., on application made to him by or on behalf of such poor person, is required to agree for the labour of such poor person or persons at any work or employment suited to his or her strength and capacity, in any parish or place near the place of his or her residence, and to maintain or cause such person or persons to be properly maintained, lodged, and provided for, until such employment shall be procured, and during the time of such work, and to receive the money to be earned by such work or labour, and apply it in such maintenance as far as the same will go, and make up the deficiency if any."

I have quoted at length the exact words of the Act because, in view of subsequent developments, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this section.¹ In fact, together with the so-called "Speenhamland Act," it was the chief cause of the terrible rise in pauperism and of a large amount of the undoubted deterioration in character which certainly took place in the very poor during more than half a century after it became law. Its principle was bad, and its results nothing less than appalling. It has been unreservedly condemned by practically every expert either in the Poor Law or in dealing with poverty. The labourer was made certain of employment. He was made "certain of receiving either from the parish or the employer sufficient for the maintenance of himself and his family . . . he

¹ "It was the first great inroad on the old system of Poor Law, and had in the end the worst possible effects" (McCulloch, quoted by Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, "The English Poor Law," p. 20).

is made secure without the exercise of care or forethought. Could a more certain way be devised for lowering character and destroying self-reliance ?”¹

It is true that the adoption of “Gilbert’s Act ” was voluntary, but no less than 924 “parishes” actually adopted it.

We must pass to the period which stretches from about 1785 to the end of the reign of George III. This is undoubtedly a period during which events happened and developments occurred which had far more than an ordinary or average effect upon the religious and economic future condition of the poorer classes of the community. First, let us remind ourselves very briefly of certain outstanding events which took place. The Seven Years’ War, which ended in 1763, left this country with a National Debt of £138,565,430. Ten years later the American War broke out, and lasted for eight years. This war added no less than £121,000,000 to the Debt. There were considerable repayments during the short intervals of peace ; but the wars which began with the French Revolution in 1793 and closed with the Battle of Waterloo added again no less than £601,500,343 to the Debt ; so that in 1816 this stood at £900,436,000, the annual charge for which was £33,000,000.² I recall these figures because I want to make quite clear what taxation meant in those days. Then, it must be remembered that the national wealth was at that time very small in comparison with what it is to-day. Even so lately as 1842 a penny on the income tax produced only £700,000, whereas in 1909-10 it produced £2,691,422, or more than four times the amount. It is, I think, generally admitted that any large increase of taxation weighs heavily upon the poor—so to speak, it filters down to them. We must therefore try to realize what this increase of taxation, necessitated by the

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 90 ; see also Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 21 : “The self-reliance of a large part of the working classes was thus undermined.”

² These figures are taken from the tables in *Whitaker’s Almanack*. Sir G. Nicholls states (*op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 161) that “in the last three years of the war—1813, 1814, 1815—the amounts raised altogether exceeded a hundred millions annually.”

increase in the National Debt incurred by war, meant to the poor.¹

I must also again refer briefly to the instability in the price of corn (and so of bread) during this period, and to the very considerable rise in its price which took place. The average price of the quarter of wheat between 1785 and 1794 (an interval of peace) seems to have been about 49s. 9d.; but between 1794 and 1801 it was 87s.² In the spring of 1796 it was above 100s., and in June of 1800 it was 134s., while in the spring of 1801 it rose to 156s. 2d.³ A rapid fluctuation in prices always hits the poor more hardly than the rich, because they are compelled to buy in small quantities, and cannot take advantage of a cheap market. Then, during this period there began those great fluctuations of trade which, with alternations of much and little employment, have ever since that time weighed heavily upon the workers. So long as our foreign trade was comparatively small, so long as both the population of the country and its wealth either remained stationary or grew but slowly, and so long as the needs of the population within the country were the chief market for either agricultural produce or manufactured goods, the fluctuations of industry were comparatively small. But with the Industrial Revolution, with the growth of a great overseas trade, with the dependence of industry upon foreign markets, which were liable to be closed, as well as upon foreign supplies of raw material, which were liable to be stopped in time of war, the conditions of industry entirely changed.

In an excellent chapter on "Government and the Wage-Earning Classes,"⁴ during this period, Meredith states that "a period of anarchy"—for as such he regarded the one before us, so far as the welfare of the poor was concerned—"can be created

¹ "As late as 1834 half the labourer's wages went in taxes" (Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 107).

² Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 130.

³ These figures are quoted in Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 129, from Tooke's "History of Prices."

⁴ "Economic History of England," pp. 261 *et seq.* This chapter should be carefully studied.

... by suddenly creating new conditions to which law and custom cannot adapt themselves with sufficient rapidity." These "new conditions," he believes, "were unduly prolonged in England from two causes—first, by the coincidence of a philosophic movement opposed to intervention, and, secondly, by a strange dearth of socio-political talent." ¹

When the Industrial Revolution arrived, England was, at least theoretically, under a system of industrial law which dated from the times of Elizabeth—a system entirely unsuited to the new conditions of trade. In practice the system had absolutely broken down, though it was not until 1813 that the wages clauses of the "Statute of Artificers" were repealed, and it was only in 1814 that its apprenticeship clauses were so; while as late as 1799 and 1800 severe laws were passed penalizing combinations of workmen.² It must be open to serious doubt whether those who urged the principle of free competition realized how little fitted this principle was to adjust economic, and consequently social, difficulties satisfactorily.

The effects of the new conditions of industry upon the physical health of the people must not be forgotten; and physical health, especially to the poor, is an asset of enormous value. Agriculture had, until this time, been the chief industry of the workers; but with the advent of the factory system, for many of these indoor employments now took the place of outdoor labour. Machinery introduced nervous strains and monotonies, the effects of which were not then clearly appreciated.³ The results of child labour in factories was often terrible. Children had before then been exploited, but child labour had not been sold wholesale to third persons for wages and keep. Under the old apprenticeship system at least something of home and family life was preserved, and in those days children would not be set to plough, or dig, or work a heavy hand-loom. But now Poor Law officials sent pauper children into the factories to watch

¹ Meredith, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

² *Ibid.*

³ It is only those who have an intimate knowledge of the working classes who can realize this to-day. I had more than abundant evidence of this when working among the shoe operatives.—W. E. C.

machinery from twelve to sixteen hours a day.¹ Was this because people were really less humanitarian? Not entirely, because at this time, especially when we remember the even reckless distribution of outdoor relief, we have evidence of a certain amount of at least sentimental humanitarianism. But there seems to have been little conception of a real justice due to the workers, and even less of any true science of social life; and certainly there could have been no idea of the inevitable results of unwise legislation upon the characters of the poor. A very brief consideration of the laws on behalf of the poor passed during this period will show that there was no clear conception of what were their real needs, and what would have been best for their permanent welfare, and for that of the community.

Unfortunately, during this period, again, the Church gave absolutely no lead as a corporate body. Individuals, especially among the Evangelicals, and small societies, like the so-called "Clapham Sect," were, as I showed in the last chapter, doing excellent work in dealing with individual cases of distress, and even with certain classes of sufferers, and in certain confined areas of activity. But if there was a want of "socio-political" talent, there was an even greater absence of any socio-ecclesiastical effort. There was no attempt to apply the broad fundamental principles of Christianity either towards guiding the development of society upon right lines, or towards extirpating the social evils which year by year were growing greater, and therefore more unmanageable. To take a single example: what evidence is there of any really serious and self-sacrificing effort to supply the spiritual needs of the rapidly increasing numbers of the poor who were congregating more and more closely in the great manufacturing towns? I can find very few cases of new churches being built between 1750 and 1820 in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, or Sheffield. When churches were erected they were usually pew-rented, and in which the poor were generally relegated to obscure corners and to uncomfortable benches. Had it not been

¹ Engels, "Condition of the Working Class," pp. 141 *et seq.*, 167, 171 *et seq.*, 193.

for the labours of John Wesley and his many co-workers, there would have been but little preaching of the Gospel to the poor. Fortunately, this preaching was often of a very practical nature.¹

I have already drawn attention to "Gilbert's Act," by which both the self-reliance and self-effort of the working classes were so greatly weakened. By an arrangement proposed by the Berkshire Justices in 1795,² the evils arising from supplementing low wages by a grant from the Poor Rate were still further accentuated. The Justices had met for the purpose of "rating wages." They declared that, owing to the increased cost of living, the poor required still more help than they were already receiving; but they further declared that, instead of regulating wages according to statute, they would recommend farmers and others to raise wages in proportion to the cost of the loaf of bread and according to the size of the workman's family; and also that, when the workman failed to earn the prescribed amount by his own labour and that of his family, he should be paid the balance out of the Poor Rate.³ This arrangement, which was widely adopted throughout the South and West of England, was nicknamed the "Speenhamland Act." It brought into full force the fatal "Allowance System," which in succeeding years proved so disastrous both to the moral and the economic welfare of the workers, which, by Gilbert's Act, had already been seriously impaired. It inevitably kept down wages. It meant not only a contribution to the labourer, but also to the employer, who supplemented the starvation wages he gave his men by a contribution paid by other ratepayers. Upon the labourer the effect was very evil. "It removed every incentive to saving . . . it made him careless and indifferent, encouraged improvident marriages, and produced an artificial increase of population which was bound to engender fresh masses of poverty."⁴

¹ For examples of this see the previous chapter.

² On May the 6th. See Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 131 *et seq.*; also Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 21, 22.

³ The exact scale is given by Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 131, 132.

⁴ Aschrott and Preston-Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 21. Probably as the result of Gilbert's Act and the "Speenhamland Act," the expenditure for the relief

Still further measures towards increasing the amount of out-relief, and also towards the ease with which it could be obtained, were taken by two Acts of Parliament, one of which was passed in 1796¹ and the other in 1815. By the first of these any Justice is empowered at his discretion to give out-relief to any industrious poor person for a month, and any two Justices may continue the order for another month, and "so on from time to time, as the occasion may require." By the second Act² a single Justice may give this relief for three months, and two Justices for six months. Sir George Nicholls rightly regards these Acts as evidently contributory causes to the large increase of poor relief given at this period. He also believes that owing to the wide separation in "social position and habits of life" between the ordinary Justice and the ordinary applicant for relief, the Justices as a body were far less qualified to deal with the real wants of the poor than were the class of men from whom the overseers had generally been chosen.³

Thus, from a variety of causes—from unwise legislation; from a great increase of taxation; from a very considerable fluctuation of, and, to some extent, a very serious rise in, prices; from the wider acceptance of the principle of *laissez-faire*, which sanctioned the unlimited exploitation of the poor, and especially of the children of the poor, an exploitation to which the manufacturers were more and more tempted as trade further and further expanded—from all these various causes the condition of a large proportion of the workers became steadily worse and worse.⁴

In 1817 Mr. Curwen moved for a Committee of the House of Commons to examine into the present state of the Poor Law and into the way in which it was administered. The motion was

of the poor rose from an average of £2,004,238 in 1783–85 to £4,267,965 in 1801. (There are no intermediate returns.)

¹ There were really two Acts passed in the same session—viz., 36 George III., caps. 10 and 23. ² 55 George III., cap. 137.

³ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 154.

⁴ "If one thing is certain about the first half of the nineteenth century . . . it is the misery and want of the mass of Englishmen" (Meredith, *op. cit.*, p. 261).

warmly supported by Lord Castlereagh, who stated that the subject was of the utmost importance for both the safety and prosperity of the country. "The present system," he said, "not only went to accumulate burdens on the country which it could not continue to bear, but to destroy the true wealth of the poor man, the capability of making exertions for his own livelihood ; for if pecuniary relief went on with the laxity which now prevailed, and all the cunning of uncultivated minds was to be directed to the means of escaping from labour and enjoying the fruits of the labours of others, a national calamity might be said to be overtaking us by a double operation—in the increased burdens imposed upon the country and the diminution of the industry from which its resources were derived."¹ The Committee was appointed, a lengthy and, to some extent, a valuable Report was issued, but the actual legislation which resulted consisted of two "Vestry Acts" and a small amendment in the "Law of Settlement."

But though little was accomplished, it is clear that the subject was engaging the attention of a very considerable number of thoughtful people. One proof of this is in the agitation which was beginning in regard to the conditions under which young people and children were employed. The first of the long series of "Factory Acts," that known as the "Health and Morals Act," was passed in 1802, though Professor Dicey is probably correct in saying that this Act "was not suggested by any general principle, but by the needs of the moment."² An epidemic had broken out in Manchester, and had caused many deaths among the apprentices—mostly pauper children sent by the Guardians from the South of England—in the cotton mills. The Act did not go far : it enjoined that the rooms of factories should be washed with quicklime and water twice a year ; that each apprentice should receive two suits of clothes ; that apprentices should not work more than twelve hours a day ; and that not more

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 168, 169. A synopsis of the Report of the Committee, issued in July, 1817, is given by Nicholls, *op. cit.*, pp. 171 *et seq.*

² "Law and Opinion in England," pp. 108 *et seq.*

than two should sleep in one bed. Unfortunately, no measures seem to have been taken to see that the Act was enforced, and it became little more than a dead letter.¹

The progress of what may be termed "humanitarian legislation" was extraordinarily slow.² The next Act of the kind was not passed until 1819. By this Act children were not to work in factories under the age of nine, and those between nine and sixteen were not to work more than twelve hours a day, exclusive of an hour and a half for meals. In 1825 a partial half-holiday was ordered on Saturdays. In 1831 night work was prohibited for persons under twenty-one; also, for those under eighteen, the working day was not to exceed twelve hours, nor on Saturdays to exceed nine hours. Woollen factories were apparently not touched by legislation until 1833, when work in these was prohibited for persons under eighteen between 8.30 p.m. and 5.30 a.m. This Act restricted the working time of children between nine and thirteen to forty hours a week, and those of young persons between thirteen and eighteen to sixty-eight hours. In silk factories children might still be admitted under nine, and those under thirteen might work ten hours a day.

Another most serious disability under which the workers then suffered was due to the Combination Act,³ which forbade all combinations of workmen, whether temporary or permanent, whose object was to obtain an advance of wages or fix the terms of employment. The Act made it a crime to assist in maintaining men on strike; it also imposed a penalty upon combinations among masters either for the reduction of wages or for an increase in the hours or quantity of work. Behind the Combination Act stood the whole law of conspiracy; "from these two," Dicey says, "any artisan who organized a strike or joined a trade union was a criminal, and liable on conviction to imprisonment; the strike was a crime, the trade union was an unlawful association."⁴ Of course, as an individual, a workman could go where

¹ Factory inspectors were not appointed until 1833.

² See Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 106 (where the official numbers of the various Acts are given), and also pp. 187 *et seq.*

³ 40 George III., cap. 106; see Dicey, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 96. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

he liked and try to make the best bargain he could ; but neither directly nor indirectly could the pressure of numbers be brought to bear upon either employers or other workers.

Let me say once more that, as my chief object is to enable my readers to see how the evils and difficulties of the present have grown out of the mistakes of the past, I am much more anxious to explain the spirit and tone which existed towards the working classes at the beginning of the nineteenth century than to dwell upon particular evils, at any rate no further than this is necessary to elucidate my argument. The first thirty years of the nineteenth century were a period of "legislative quiescence."¹ It was a time when the "Old Toryism" was dominant alike in Church and State. There was not merely strong objection to any kind of legislative interference ; there was a positive dread of this. The excesses of the French Revolution had not been forgotten. Even statesmen of very considerable ability were averse to reform, lest reform should lead to the undermining of old institutions whose stability was regarded as essential for the national welfare. As Professor Dicey says : "In England the French Revolution worked nothing but evil ; it delayed salutary changes for forty years, and rendered reforms, when at last they came, less beneficial than they might have been, if they had been gradually carried out as the natural result of the undisturbed development of ideas suggested by English good sense and English love of justice."²

After the close of the war with France, trade, population, and the national wealth increased even more rapidly than hitherto. The changes which had been taking place for more than half a century now proceeded at an accelerated pace. The large towns grew larger, and the manufacturing districts became more and more populous. At the same time the national and civic institutions became less and less able to meet the needs of the age. Parliament became even less representative of the people. It was still actually representative of England as it was before

¹ On this subject see Dicey, *op. cit.*, Lecture V., pp. 70 *et seq.*

² Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

the Industrial Revolution began, for the great majority of the members were still either landed proprietors or the nominees of these. The Church became more and more incapable of doing the work which urgently needed to be done. Many of the northern parishes were of immense area, over which formerly a sparse population had been scattered in tiny hamlets. What could the clergy do when there poured into these huge parishes great hordes of workers, so that the population within them multiplied many times over? When we compare the immense efforts made by the Church to-day to meet the needs of new populations,¹ with the almost absolute want of effort evinced under similar circumstances a hundred years ago, we cannot wonder that the people lapsed into indifference—indeed, almost into heathenism.

There are still here and there in England undivided parishes of from twenty to forty thousand people, but in these we generally find a large staff of clergy at work. A hundred, even sixty, years ago there were parishes where two clergymen were working amid similar populations. Then, if neither Parliament nor the Church proved themselves equal to meeting the new conditions, the municipalities showed themselves even less able to do so. Their general inefficiency and the corruption which was rife in their management had become bywords. The Commission which was appointed in 1833 to inquire into the circumstances of the 246 towns which claimed to exercise municipal privileges reported that they found overwhelming evidence of widespread inefficiency and corruption. They state that "it has become customary not to rely on the Municipal Corporations for exercising the powers incident to good municipal government"; and "in a large number of cases vacancies in the privileged bodies were filled, not by open election, but by co-optation by the surviving members; and among 246 towns, only 28 were in the habit of publishing accounts."²

I must now turn to consider briefly the work of two social

¹ *E.g.*, in East London-over-the-Border.

² Jenks, "English Local Government," pp. 182, 183.

reformers which began during this period. Robert Owen and Thomas Chalmers were probably as widely different both in their characters and their convictions as it is possible for two men to be, but both stand head and shoulders above their contemporaries for two reasons: First, both saw clearly that far-reaching measures of reform on behalf of the workers were absolutely necessary; secondly, both were guided in their labours to effect these reforms by clear, definite, and comprehensive principles. Apart from these two points of likeness, the two men represent two entirely different schools of thought. Indeed, so far as modern "social work" is concerned, they may be regarded as the pioneers of methods which are generally, though sometimes wrongly, set against each other in dealing with the problems of poverty. Robert Owen¹ laid the chief stress upon "circumstances." He believed that social reform, in the fullest sense of the term, must come primarily, if not almost exclusively, through improving the circumstances of the workers. On the other hand, Chalmers believed in first attacking the problem of character; instead of beginning by doing much for the people, he would commence by appealing to them to make every effort to help themselves. Owen was not only a Radical of the Radicals: he is at least one of the fathers of modern Socialism;² while Chalmers was in many respects intensely Conservative. The representatives of both these leaders are with us to-day, and unfortunately are, at least to some extent, divided into separate, if not positively antagonistic, camps in the warfare against poverty and its attendant evils.

For our present purpose we need not go back farther into Owen's history than the time when he took over the management of the New Lanark Mills on the Clyde. There he found some thirteen hundred workpeople and their families, and some

¹ There is a good account of Robert Owen's career in the "Dictionary of National Biography"; also a more brief but illuminating sketch of his work and opinions in Mrs. Webb's "Co-operative Movement in Great Britain," pp. 12 *et seq.*

² Bishop Westcott speaks of "the paternal socialism of Owen." Of course, the term "socialism" had not been coined at the time of which I write.

four to five hundred pauper apprentices. Both the economic and the moral condition of these people was extremely bad. Drunkenness was terribly common, and what is usually more specifically termed "immorality" was rife. Owen began by raising the wages of the workers, reducing the hours of labour from seventeen to ten per day, and prohibiting the employment of children under ten years old. He provided free education, free amusements, cheap provisions, and good cottages for the workers. Even his own partners prophesied financial ruin from these experiments, but the actual result was a profit on the mills of £160,000 in four years. In 1816 he urged the House of Commons to limit all work in factories to ten and a half hours a day, to forbid the employment of children under ten, and to institute half-time for those under twelve years old.¹ He proposed a national system of free and compulsory education, the establishment of free libraries, and that public bodies should undertake the housing of the poor. In all this Owen was the true progenitor of the so-called "Socialistic legislation" which has been passed during the last forty years. Very largely because he failed to get the Government to sympathize with his schemes, he founded his Communities of Voluntary Associates, and through them became the real father of the Co-operative Movement. Owen's Socialism and his Co-operation can hardly be separated, for he states that while he believed "in unrestrained co-operation on the part of all for every purpose of human life," he wished "it to be understood that the ultimate object of all co-operative associations, whether engaged in trading, manufacturing, or agricultural pursuits, is community in land."²

I need not enter into Owen's later life and work, which certainly did not fulfil the promise of his earlier years. He became more and more antagonistic to religion, and certainly his strongly anti-religious bias lost him many friends. But in judging Owen we must remember the presentation of Christianity

¹ Owen was largely instrumental in the passing of the Factory Act of 1818.

² Upon Owen's social views, see Mrs. Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 17 *et seq.*

current at the time—how extremely narrow and individualistic and altogether “other-worldly” it generally was. Had Christianity been expressed to him early in life as it was afterwards taught by Maurice and Westcott, would he have been so entirely out of sympathy with it as he ultimately became?

Thomas Chalmers's ¹ first parish was Kilmany, near Dundee, where there was no Poor Rate. He had previously acted for a short time as assistant minister in a border parish near Hawick, where the Poor Law was established. Through a near relation, with whom he frequently stayed, he also had opportunities of watching the Poor Law at work at Kingbrompton, in Somersetshire. Kilmany and Kingbrompton were in many respects similar parishes: in each the population was between 700 and 800; but in Kilmany the relief of the poor cost under £20 a year, while in Kingbrompton it cost £1,260. A careful comparison of the results upon the poor—upon their characters as well as upon their economic condition—made a deep impression upon Chalmers. In 1815 ² he became the minister of the Tron Church in Glasgow, a parish with 11,000 people. His first task there was to visit and note the circumstances of every family. He found that at least two-thirds of the people had cast off even the very form and practice of religion. The poverty was terrible; but his first suggestion, after gaining an intimate knowledge of its conditions, was that the parish should cut itself off from sharing in the compulsory assessment for the poor, and that all the relief given should be obtained from voluntary sources. But it was not at the Tron Church, but in the new parish of St. John's, containing 10,000 people, in the poorest part of Glasgow, and of which he became, in 1819, the first

¹ An excellent little book giving a brief life of Chalmers and many valuable excerpts from his writings—“Problems of Poverty, Selections from the Economic and Social Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D.,” by Henry Hunter—has recently been published. Mr. Neville Masterman's “Chalmers on Charity” should also be read.

² When he was thirty-five years of age (he was born in 1780). In 1807 he published his first book, “An Inquiry into the Extent and Stability of National Resources.”

minister, that Chalmers worked out his system for raising the poor from poverty and degradation. From a collection at an evening service attended by only the poor, and amounting to about £80 a year, Chalmers provided all the money really needed for every case of distress. His method was to divide the parish into 25 districts, each containing 50 families, or about 400 people. Over each district was placed a deacon, who, pending investigation and obtaining the relief necessary, was empowered to give temporary assistance. Of course, the most careful investigation was made into the circumstances of every applicant for relief. Chalmers's four rules of procedure should be remembered : (1) Having ascertained destitution, if possible, stimulate the industry of the applicant, and see what more he might earn ; (2) improve his economy, and see what the things are upon which he might save ; (3) seek after his relatives, and see what they will give ; (4) make the case known among the neighbours, and see whether the necessity may not be got over by a joint effort of liberality.

Every penny that Chalmers could save from funds devoted to relief he expended upon education. Thus the money which was saved by teaching people thrift was actually devoted to their permanent improvement. At St. John's he had about forty small Sunday-schools in various parts of the parish, which were filled by workers going round and soliciting the attendance of the children.¹

Though a man of the strongest religious convictions, and with the firmest belief in the power of Christianity to raise human nature, Chalmers should yet, I think, be placed among those who approached the social problem primarily from the humanitarian point of view, rather than among those who, like Maurice and Westcott, found their chief inspiration in a deeply reasoned Christian philosophy of man and of society. I do not think that with Chalmers the theological interest was paramount in the

¹ Chalmers's ministry at St. John's lasted only four years. In 1823 he became Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. He died in 1847, quite suddenly, during an Assembly of the Church.

same way that it was with the two leaders I have mentioned. To Maurice and Westcott poverty was rampant, and men, women, and children were oppressed and degraded *because* the divine relationships which should exist in society had been disregarded, and because the true nature of man had been forgotten. To Chalmers Christianity was rather the greatest of all instruments for building up character, for enabling each individual to become what he should be. In Chalmers's theology, at any rate as applied to the problem of poverty, there seems to linger at least a trace of eighteenth-century utilitarianism. Where Chalmers was truly great—and here among social reformers he has had few equals—was in his knowledge of how to deal with human nature. He knew the tendency of men to lean upon external help, and he knew that this meant deterioration of character. Consequently his great aim was to teach them self-respect issuing in self-effort. He believed, and innumerable instances have proved him to be right, that when we can encourage people to do the best that is in them, not only their economic, but their moral, health has generally been regained.

XIII.

THE POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1834.

IN the two previous chapters we have brought the history of our subject down to the close of the reign of George III. In this chapter I propose to deal, first, with the conditions which existed during the years immediately preceding the passing of the extremely important Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834; secondly, with the chief provisions of that law; and, thirdly, though very briefly, with the history of the years immediately following its enactment.

The years which followed the close of the great war with France—that is, from 1815 onwards—certainly witnessed an immense increase in the aggregate wealth of the nation¹; but they did not witness a corresponding general improvement in the economic and social condition of the poorest classes. I use the term “general improvement” advisedly, because there is evidence to show that among certain sections of the workers there was a very decided increase of welfare during this period.² But, speaking generally, the condition, at any rate of the very poor, grew steadily worse and worse as time went on. Eventually it became so evil that, in spite of a growing acceptance of the principle of *laissez-faire* (at any rate, so far as the conditions of trade were concerned), the minds, and to some extent the consciences, of thoughtful people became greatly exercised.

¹ The general trade of the United Kingdom (merchandise only) in 1820 was £81,421,646, or £4 1s. 10d. per head; in 1840 it was £183,973,725, or £6 6s. 8d. per head.

² Savings banks were constituted and regulated by 57 George III., cap. 150, and 58 George III., cap. 48. In 1833 there were in England and Wales 408 savings banks, with 425,283 depositors, and balances of £14,334,393.

It became more and more clear that either national bankruptcy or revolution must ensue, unless some drastic change was made both in the nature and the administration of the Poor Law. The evidence of the Commissioners of 1833 upon the first of these dangers is very striking. They state that there are many parishes "in which the pressure of the Poor Rate has reduced the rent to half, or to less than half, of what it would have been if the land had been situated in an unpauperized district, and some in which it has been impossible for the owner to find a tenant."¹ The worst case was that of Cholesbury, in Buckinghamshire, where the collection of the Poor Rate had "suddenly ceased . . . the landlords having given up their rents, the farmers their tenancies, and the clergyman his glebe and his tithes."² The evidence of widespread lawlessness—the usual precursor of revolution—is equally strong. The burning of stackyards became appallingly common. Even patrols of soldiers were useless to prevent it, as were also rewards of as much as £500 for the convictions of offenders. These evil conditions were naturally the cause, as incendiarism was the expression, of the existence of the bitterest feelings between the labourers and their employers.³

If this was the state of things in the agricultural districts, that in the manufacturing towns was certainly no better. Engels' book upon "The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844"⁴ may paint the picture in the darkest possible colours; it may be condemned as an *ex parte* statement—indeed, that to a great extent it is so I am perfectly prepared to admit—but when every allowance or deduction has been made for the writer's predilections and prejudices, the conditions of the slums of Manchester and other large towns which he describes can only be regarded as appalling. In reading his book two things must be remembered: First, that

¹ Nicholls, "History of the Poor Law," vol. ii., p. 238.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 283, 284.

⁴ Published in German in 1845; in English in New York in 1885; republished in England in 1892.

what he saw in 1844 was the result of the influence, during a very considerable period, of something even worse than *laissez-faire* on the part of the particular authorities who were then in a position of responsibility; actually the evils he describes had been gradually accumulating ever since the beginning of the "Industrial Revolution." Secondly, Engels is not content with general descriptions or general charges; he gives chapter and verse for his statements, even to the names of the streets and the numbers of the houses. Moreover, his book is full of extracts from official reports, to which he gives exact references, and in case after case he gives both dates and figures. Because my space is limited, and because his book is so easily accessible, I shall forbear from giving any quotations; all I would say is, that if anyone wishes to realize how terrible were the conditions of life and health and morality among immense numbers of the poorest strata of the people during, say, the first thirty years after the Battle of Waterloo, let him read carefully what Engels has to tell of the results of personal observation made during several months spent in careful investigation.¹

The question may well be asked, Why had these evil conditions been permitted to grow until they became so utterly bad? or, Why were they still permitted to exist? A complete answer to these questions would involve a lengthy description of the condition both of political thought and of the actual constitution of the Houses of Parliament during this time. Briefly, the chief factors in the neglect were, first, the extraordinary dread of reform by means of legislation which existed during the early part of the nineteenth century; and, secondly, a dominant belief in the principle of *laissez-faire*, which in this particular connection might almost have been interpreted to mean, "Leave things to themselves, and in due time they will work out their own solution." One of the strangest—indeed most paradoxical—features of the period was that side by side

¹ The evidence which Engels produces of the state of the towns may be supplemented by that of "The Hungry Forties" (Fisher Unwin) for the agricultural districts.

with this conviction, in the actual administration of the Poor Law this principle was the one last to be applied. Here, so far as administration was concerned, a measure of *laissez-faire* would have been of immense benefit to the poor. In this connection the following sentences from the Report of the Commission of 1833 are of exceptional interest: "Things were not left to take their own course. Unhappily, no knowledge is so rare as the knowledge when to do nothing."¹

But with the passing of the first Reform Bill in 1832 the period of "legislative quiescence," which synchronized with the domination of the old Toryism, came suddenly to an end.² It must not from this be inferred that the change in public opinion was equally sudden; on the contrary, the forces which produced the Benthamite Liberalism, which so strongly marked the next forty years, had been gradually, though surely, gathering in strength.³ Previous to the appointment of the Commission "to inquire into the operation of Poor Laws and report thereon" in February, 1832, at least two serious attempts to amend the law and its administration had recently been made; and though both the Bills to which I refer failed to obtain the sanction of Parliament, both undoubtedly exercised considerable influence upon the Act of 1834. The first of these two Bills was that of Mr. Scarlett, which was introduced in 1821,⁴ but was withdrawn after its second reading in the Commons. There was much in this Bill which was admirable, but the changes which it advocated were too drastic to obtain acceptance at that time. The second Bill⁵ was introduced by a Mr. Nolan, who was certainly an authority upon the subject. This Bill was of a far less sweeping nature than Mr. Scarlett's, but, although it was before the House for more than one session, it also failed

¹ Report of the Commissioners made in 1834; reprinted in 1905 [Cd. 2728], p. 121.

² Lord Grey became Prime Minister in 1830, and formed the first Whig or Liberal Ministry since 1782.

³ On the "Close of the Period of Quiescence," and on "The Period of Benthamism or Individualism," see Dicey, "Law and Opinion," pp. 110 ff.

⁴ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 208.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

to become law. I mention these two Bills in order to show that the subject was not only receiving attention, but that those who had studied it were becoming more and more convinced of the necessity of change, both in the law itself and in its administration.

One factor which undoubtedly most strongly influenced not only the appointment of the Commission of 1832, but also the nature of some of the recommendations of that Commission, was the evidence from Southwell and one or two other places of what a strict and judicious administration of even the existing law could effect. The reforms at Southwell commenced in 1821; in four years the amount expended on relief of the poor fell from £2,006 7s. to £517 13s.; that expended on providing employment for able-bodied labourers, from £292 10s. to nil; that in payment of rent, from £184 18s. also to nil; that expended upon bastardy was reduced to a third; besides these particular reforms, the workhouse itself was thoroughly reformed, the sexes were separated, the inmates classified, and the "House" was made what it should be—a test of destitution. The results of these reforms in the administration of the law were made widely known, especially those of the application of workhouse relief, and, as I have just stated, they undoubtedly had an immense influence upon the recommendations of the Commission and, later, upon the framing of the Act of 1834.¹

The history of the Commission upon whose Report that Act was framed, the chief provisions of the Act, and the beneficial results which followed (wherever the Act was efficiently administered), are so well known—or at least may be so easily learnt elsewhere—that I need not enter into them at any considerable length. The following brief summary will, I hope, be sufficient to indicate the successive steps which led to the passing of the Act:

On February 1, 1832, Lord Althorp stated in the House of Commons "that the general question of the Poor Laws was

¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., pp. 227 *et seq.*

a subject of such magnitude, and involved such a variety of important considerations," that the Government had determined to appoint Commissioners to ascertain by means of local investigation how the different systems worked throughout the country. Upon the results of this investigation the future action of the Government would depend." The Commissioners appointed Assistant Commissioners, who visited the various districts. In March, 1833, the Commissioners presented a volume of extracts from the evidence which by that time had been obtained.¹ In this preliminary Report it is stated that maladministration appeared to have spread over almost every part of the country, and that of this maladministration actual intimidation of those supposed to be unfavourable to profuse relief was one of the most extensive sources. On February 20, 1834, the complete Report of the Commissioners was issued, accompanied by an Appendix, in which the evidence collected was given, though much of this evidence was also embodied in the Report itself. The Commissioners state that the evidence comes "from every county and almost every town, and from a very large proportion of even the villages in England. It is derived from many thousand witnesses of every rank and every profession and employment . . . differing in every conceivable degree in education, habits, and interests, and agreeing only in their practical experience as to the matter in question." They further state that in their opinion the amendment of the Poor Laws "is, perhaps, the most urgent and most important measure now remaining for the consideration of Parliament."²

A Bill embodying the recommendations of the Commissioners was introduced into and read a first time in the House of Commons on April 17, 1834; it was read a second time on May 9, when 299 members voted for it, and only 20 against it; it was read a third time on July 1; on the following day it was read for the first time in the House of Lords, and, finally, it

¹ This was signed by the Bishop of London (Blomfield), the Bishop of Chester (Sumner), Sturges Bourne, Nassau W. Senior, H. Bishop, H. Gawler, W. Coulson, James Trail, and Edwin Chadwick.

² Reprint of Report (1905), p. 5.

received the Royal Assent on August 14. During the passage of the Bill through the two Houses it received various amendments, the chief of which were, first, the limitation of the duration of the Act to five years, and, secondly, the limitation of the powers of the three Commissioners under whom the various local authorities were to act, and who were to be at once the final authority and the ultimate court of appeal in all matters relating to its administration.¹

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this measure, not only because it practically revolutionized the administration of the Poor Law, but because, in spite of the Reports of the Commission (appointed in December, 1905) presented to Parliament in 1909, it still remains to all intents and purposes the law under which the relief of the poor is administered to-day.

The two following verdicts, the first relating to the Report of the Commissioners, and the second to the passage of the Bill through Parliament, are worthy of being remembered :

1. "In February, 1834, was published perhaps the most remarkable and startling document to be found in the whole range of English—perhaps, indeed, of all social—history. . . . In the list of nine gentlemen who composed the Commission there is not to be found a single ornamental name. . . . It was their rare good fortune not only to lay bare the existence of abuses and trace them to their roots, but also to propound and enforce the remedies by which they might be cured. It is seldom, indeed, that the conditions of so vast and sweeping a reform are found coexisting. The evils were gross and alarming; there was a Ministry that had been carried into power by an outburst of reforming zeal; above all, there was a readiness to be guided by principles of purely scientific legislation. . . . Success was therefore at once inevitable and assured."²

¹ Upon omissions in the Act see Nicholls, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 271. It may be questioned whether the framers of the Act intended that quite so large a discretion should be left the Guardians, as these were afterwards proved to have.

² T. W. Fowle, "The Poor Law," pp. 75, 76.

2. "The successful passage of this necessary but, unfortunately, all too limited measure of reform is one of the most remarkable incidents in our constitutional history. There is no other instance in the history of democracy in which a Government has dared to benefit the people by depriving them of a right to participate in a public fund, where also the Opposition, as a party, has refrained from making capital out of the obvious difficulties of the situation. It may be added, that the experiment then succeeded because legislation in detail was taken out of the hands of Parliament, and put into the hands of a non-elective body."¹

The recommendations of the Commission and the actual contents of the Act were, in the main, so similar, that, at any rate for our present purpose, they may be considered together. So far as the principles are concerned upon which the Act was framed, these may be pronounced excellent. Where the Act has failed, as undoubtedly in many instances, especially in recent years, it has failed, the failure has not been due to wrong principles, but because, as was the case with the previous great Act of Elizabeth's reign, those who have administered it have either forgotten its principles, or have administered it in a spirit which was not in accordance with that of those who framed it. The chief weakness of the Act, as experience has proved, lay in the fact that too much freedom of action was left to the amateurs who constituted the Local Authority; that the latitude permitted to these in the practical (and, I would add, personal) application of the law was too wide. The professional—*i.e.*, the Relieving Officer—has been too often and too much overruled by the amateur, the ignorant Guardian, who apparently had learnt little from the experience of the past, and who declined to administer the law in strict accordance with the wisdom of its authors.

Briefly, the following may be regarded as the root-principles of the measure: A clear distinction must be made between "the poor" and "the indigent," and it must be understood that the

¹ "History of the English Poor Law," T: Mackay, vol. iii., p. 151.

latter "alone come within the province of the Poor Law." Relief must be so administered to the indigent "that their condition shall in no case be so eligible as the condition of persons of the lowest class subsisting on the fruits of their own industry." This principle, which, unfortunately, has often been disregarded in practice, is essential, if people are not to be tempted to become paupers, and if they are to be encouraged to use any measure of self-effort. In practice, it was found that when out-relief was withdrawn or diminished in any district, the wages paid immediately increased.¹ There was also a diminution in the number of improvident marriages, and also in the amount of crime.² Another principle asserted by the Report and embodied in the Act, was "that the practice of giving relief in well-regulated workhouses, and the abolition of partial relief to the able-bodied, having been tried and found beneficial, be extended to all places."³ As showing the continuity of our English Poor Law, it is interesting to notice that there was appended to this assertion the following words: "This being the only means by which the intention of the Statute of Elizabeth⁴ can be beneficially carried into effect." At least the implied ground for an application for public assistance should be the inability to maintain life or existence, at any rate by lawful means. Hence, such an applicant must accept relief on the terms which it has been shown from experience that the common welfare requires. It is, of course, "the exceptional case" which is a difficulty, and which evokes a sympathy which is tempted to legislate for such a case as if it were typical rather than exceptional. The wisdom of the Commissioners is seen in the following words: "The bane of all pauper legislation has been the legislation for extreme cases. Every exception, every violation of the general rule to meet a real case of unusual hardship, lets in a whole class of fraudulent cases, by which that rule must in time be destroyed. Where cases of real hardship

¹ Reprint of Report, pp. 237 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, pp. 241 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 262. An exception is made in regard to medical attendance.

⁴ 43 Elizabeth, cap. 2.

occur, the remedy must be applied by individual charity—a virtue for which no system of compulsory relief can be, or ought to be, a substitute.”¹

The value of the “Workhouse Test” is, as the Report explains, “a self-acting test of the claim of the applicant,” for by this the “line between those who do, and those who do not, need relief is . . . drawn perfectly.” Pauperism among the greater number of the able bodied “has originated in indolence, improvidence, or vice, and might have been averted by ordinary care and industry.”² To give out-relief, even in small amounts, to such people is only to pander to idleness or thriftlessness. The offer of the “House” will, it is proved by experience, induce many whose wants arise from idleness to earn the means of subsistence; it represses fraudulent claims for support, and frequently calls forth the aid of assistance from friends. Another great principle for which the Commissioners most wisely contended was “the removal from the distributors of all discretionary powers, and thereby diminishing abusive administration.”³ Unfortunately, experience has proved that, with all their care to effect this, the actual working of the Act has not achieved the object which the Commissioners had here in view. The “discretionary powers” left to the Guardians are still very considerable, and are frequently most unwisely used. The Report speaks of “the increased liability to every sort of pernicious influence” to which local distributors of relief, popularly elected, are subject. One of the most pernicious forms of influence is that of intimidation—*e.g.*, of small tradesmen from their customers; the Guardian who is a publican is particularly open to this.

The real crux of the problem in 1834, as in almost every reform suggested or legislative change enacted for the better relief of the poor, lies in the *administration* of the law. The Commissioners were fully alive to this danger. As they say: “The instances presented to us throughout the present inquiry of the defeat of former legislation . . . often by an adminis-

¹ Reprint of Report, p. 263.

² *Ibid.*, p. 264.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

tration directly at variance with the expressed will of the Legislature, have forced us to distrust the operation of the clearest enactments, and even to apprehend unforeseen mischiefs from them, unless an especial agency be appointed and empowered to superintend and control their execution.”¹ Much is also said upon “the want of appropriate knowledge,” “the short duration of the authority,” “the inadequacy of motives to support a correct administration,” “the strength of interests in abusive administration” on the part of popularly elected distributors of Poor Relief.

The administration of the Act was placed in the hands of three Commissioners, who were empowered to appoint nine Assistant Commissioners (whose places in 1847 were taken by the Poor Law Inspectors). The powers placed in the hands of the Commissioners were very extensive, the chief of these being that of making and issuing “rules, orders, and regulations for the management of the poor, for the government of work-houses, and the education of children therein . . . for the guidance and control of all guardians, vestries, and parish officers, so far as relates to the management of the poor, and the keeping, examining, auditing, and allowing or disallowing of accounts . . . or any expenditure for the relief of the poor, and for carrying this Act into execution in all other respects, etc.”² It will at once be realized how extensive these powers were; but upon the admirable manner in which they were used by the first Commissioners there cannot be two opinions. In 1839 the term for which they were appointed came to an end, but this was renewed annually until 1842, when it was further renewed for a period of five years. In that year a change was made by a ministerial department responsible to Parliament being constituted, the Minister responsible being named the President of the Poor Law Board. Finally, in 1871, the name of the department was changed into the “Local Government Board,” which was placed under one responsible head.³

¹ Reprint of Report, pp. 280, 281.

² Section 15. Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

³ Fowle, “The Poor Law,” p. 104.

From the date of the passing of the Act of 1834 to the present time the organization and administration of Poor Relief has been in the hands of the Central Board, which has freely exercised the large latitude given to it by the Act. The chief instrument used by the Board has been the Poor Law Orders, which it has so frequently issued, and which, under the Act, may be said to constitute the law under which the relief of the poor is now administered. Many of these Orders are of very considerable importance. For instance, the so-called "General Prohibitory Order," issued in 1844, prohibiting out-relief to the able-bodied, and the "Consolidated Order" of 1847, which laid down strict regulations in regard to the meetings of Guardians, the management of workhouses, and the duties of officers. Besides these Orders, the Local Government Board from time to time issues "Circulars," which are practically declarations of policy — in other words, "exhortations" — to the local authorities. These cannot be enforced by law; they are obeyed by some and disobeyed by other authorities. Hence there has arisen a state of things which is contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the Act of 1834—namely, a wide divergence in certain matters of administration.¹

In considering the immediate effects of the Poor Law Amendment Act, we must remember that the Commissioners had two kinds of obstacles to overcome.² The first kind arose both from the Local Authorities and from the recipients of relief. The Guardians were in some cases, from motives of economy, slow in providing effective workhouse buildings, and in a few places there were riotous proceedings, mainly on account of the rule requiring that half the relief given to able-bodied paupers should be given in kind. But on the whole the obstacles purposely raised against the measure were far less than might have been expected. The second class of obstacles, which were due to circumstances entirely beyond the control of the Commissioners,

¹ See Majority Report of 1909, 8vo. edition, pp. 120 *et seq.*

² On this subject see "History of the English Poor Law," vol. iii. (Mackay), chap. xii., pp. 257 *et seq.*

were far greater and more serious. The autumn of 1836 was very wet, and the following winter one of such great severity that outdoor employment was for a time entirely suspended. In the following year there was a bad harvest, a great rise in price of the necessaries of life, and, in addition, a very serious mortality from an exceptionally severe and widespread epidemic of influenza. In 1838 and 1839 the high prices of food and a general stagnation of trade continued, as was the case more or less for at least five years after this time. During all this time much hardship and privation were undoubtedly suffered by the poor. A period of still greater distress began in 1845, when a cold spring and a wet summer was succeeded by a severe outbreak of potato disease, both in that year and the following one. Wheat advanced from 54s. to 75s. the quarter, and the price of other provisions rose in proportion. To add to the trouble, the winter of 1846-47 was also one of unusual severity. On the top of these difficulties there was a very considerable immigration of Irish poor, owing to the famine in that country, into all the western ports of England, the number arriving in Liverpool alone during three months in the spring of 1847 being upwards of 130,000. When we remember all this, we cannot wonder that the administration of the new law was attended with peculiar difficulties, and it says much for the administrative ability of both the Commissioners and their assistants that they weathered the storm as successfully as they did.

It is important to bear the fact of these "lean years" in mind—the "hungry forties," as they have been termed—not only because they greatly accentuated the difficulties which naturally met the Poor Law reformers of those days, but because they were the years which immediately preceded the work of Maurice and the earlier "Christian Socialists." They were also the years of the Chartist agitation. The England which nearly broke the tender and sympathetic heart of Maurice, and which called forth the bitter invectives of "Parson Lot," was the England of these terrible years. Undoubtedly the new Poor Law came only just in time. What would have happened had

not public relief in those days been under the wise administration of the men who were then responsible for the manner in which it was distributed we know not ; but we can well imagine that the condition of the poor, dreadful as it was, might have been infinitely worse. It said much for the new law that its promoters were able, in the midst of such overwhelming difficulties, to pursue the path which they felt sure was for the ultimate benefit of the people. Had the administration of the Poor Law since that time been consistently carried out in the spirit in which its promoters intended that it should be, the condition of the poorest classes in England would to-day be far more really prosperous than what it actually is.¹

The history of the Poor Law since 1847—the date of the dissolution of the Commission—is one rather of difficulties of administration than of new legislation ; indeed, it would be true to say that since the Act of 1834 there has been no measure of outstanding importance dealing with the Poor Law placed upon the Statute-Book. One reason for dissolving the Commission was that it had no representative in Parliament ; hence there was no one who was primarily responsible for administering the law and at the same time able in Parliament either to answer questions or refute criticisms. By the Act² of 1847, which dissolved the old Commission, all the powers of this were transferred to the new Commission. By the same Act it was ordered that aged couples were not to be separated in the workhouses, and that Visiting Committees for these institutions must be appointed by the Guardians. In 1847-48³ the amount expended on Poor Relief, especially so far as related to the able-bodied, reached a relatively high figure. This was doubtless in part due to the evil conditions of the poor at this time, with which I have already dealt ; but it also shows that already the original purpose of the Act was to some extent being lost sight

¹ This period is dealt with at length by Mackay, *op. cit.*, chap. xiv.

² 10 and 11 Victoria, cap. 109.

³ In 1848 the amount expended for relief and maintenance of the poor was £6,180,675, against £4,954,204 in 1846. The rate per head of population in 1848 was 7s. 1½d., against 5s. 10½d. in 1846.

of, and that the intentions of those who framed it were not being carried out by the local authorities responsible for its administration. There can, I think, be little doubt that Mr. Mackay is correct when he states that "it should be remembered, in justice to those who conceived the Act of 1834, that central control meant to them the gradual supersession of local empiricism by introducing the rule of salaried experts responsible to a central authority, and merely inspectable, to use Bentham's word, by the local authority."¹ Apart from such questions as those connected with "settlement," "vagrancy," and "rating" (which may be regarded as belonging to definite sections or departments of the law), the chief difficulties which have arisen in connection with the Poor Law during the last eighty years have been due to the fact that by the Poor Law Amendment Act too great a power was still left in the hands of the amateur administrator; and that term is certainly not too strong a term for the average member of the ordinary Board of Guardians.

When we consider the conditions existing at the time, especially in regard to administration, the Act of 1834 probably went as far as it was then possible to go. The Commissioners felt obliged to recommend that at least some measure of responsibility should be left to the Local Authorities, though they realized that these were hardly fit to exercise this. The failure of the law during the last half-century to accomplish what it might have done has been due chiefly to three causes: First, to the ignorance of many Guardians; secondly, to the inability of these to resist pressure from outside influences; thirdly, to greatly altered circumstances. However far-sighted a body of legislators may be, they can hardly be expected to foresee the immensely altered conditions which may arise nearly a century hence. That the principles upon which the reformers of 1834 acted were right we cannot doubt; indeed, it will be an evil day for the permanent welfare of the poor of this country should different principles be substituted for them, and a Poor Law, or

¹ Mackay, *op. cit.*, p. 267

a substitute for this, be enacted which disregards these principles, whose truth and usefulness have been proved by experience.

In saying this I am not condemning an opinion, which has already been largely expressed in practice, that much which eighty years ago was regarded as coming within the province or jurisdiction of the Poor Law Authority should be so regarded no longer. During recent years, from a variety of causes, the province within which governmental agencies enter into the daily life of the people has been much extended, and the nature of this interference has become much more complex. Other authorities—such as those of the municipality, including, for instance, the authorities dealing with the public health and with education—now to a certain extent overlap by doing work which is also done by the Guardians. Whatever be our opinion as to which is the best authority to do a certain work, we must be agreed that overlapping—which means waste, if not friction—should be avoided.¹ In any prophecy as to the probable future functions of the Poor Law, or as to the direction in which this may develop or be curtailed, this fact must be remembered, as also must the growing conviction that the day of the amateur administrator is over. Inefficient administration is too expensive for those who have to find the funds; also, in spite of the most excellent intentions, because it so often does harm rather than good, it is ultimately terribly expensive to those who are the objects of its activities.

¹ The Minority Report of 1909. The chief proposal of the Minority was that all the various functions of the Poor Law should be handed over to the existing authorities which were now overlapping its various departments.

XIV.

THE RISE OF COLLECTIVISM.

IN this chapter I propose to deal with the work of the so-called Christian Socialists, who, under the leadership of Professor Maurice, inaugurated a movement whose effects are not only still with us, but are growing in both strength and in comprehensiveness of influence year by year. The history of the movement has been told so often and so fully,¹ that I shall not attempt to retell it. I prefer to deal rather with the causes which led to it, the principles which inspired it, and the chief results which issued from it.

In the two previous chapters I have shown that in the thirties and forties the condition of the poor had become worse and worse. During these years they "were passing through one of the most terrible experiences of all their long unhappy history"; they had been reduced to "a condition of penury and despair." In 1840 Lord John Russell stated in the House of Commons that the people of the British Isles were "in a worse condition than the negroes in the West Indies"; and Dr. Arnold wrote to Carlyle that he believed that "the state of society in England was never yet paralleled in history."² Doubt-

¹ *E.g.*, in "The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice," two volumes, by his son; also in Charles Kingsley's "Life"; in Kaufmann's "Christian Socialism," and in his "Socialism and Modern Thought"; also in a lecture (appended to his "Social Development under Christian Influence") upon "The Christian Socialist Movement and Co-operation." The best short account of F. D. Maurice is in the "Leaders of the Church" series, by Mr. C. F. G. Masterman.

² A graphic picture of the period will be found in Mr. Masterman's chapter on "The Shaking of the Earth," in his life of Maurice; also in "The Hungry Forties."

less, as I have already shown, there was more than one cause for this terrible condition of things ; but however many the causes may have been, no one can, I think, deny that among them that of an absolutely unrestricted competition, coupled with, or perhaps rather as part of the issues of, the doctrine of *laissez faire*, pushed to its extremest limits, was the chiefest. Though, no doubt, to some extent unconsciously, yet none the less truly, men had actually become cannibals ; they were living off each other—or, rather, the strong were engaged in devouring the weak. If ever the necessity of right social principles, or the inevitable evil result of wrong social principles, was clearly shown, it was so at this time. The necessity of being governed by self-interest, the right of absolutely unrestricted competition, and the non-interference of the State on behalf of individuals or certain classes, had become accepted as practically axiomatic rules of conduct. For at least three-quarters of a century men had been governed by, or had worked according to, these principles ; the condition of the workers in 1848 was the inevitable issue.

It was against these principles, at that time so generally accepted, that Maurice and his co-workers vehemently protested. They proclaimed them to be absolutely false. In season and out they preached and taught and wrote and worked against them. But before stating Maurice's convictions, which I shall try to do, as far as possible, in his own words, one or two points must be noticed. Maurice came to his task with a rich equipment. He was no longer young, for in 1848 he was forty-three years of age¹ ; he was well read in theology, in philosophy, and in history ; he was not only a student, but also a hard, if not always a clear, thinker. Then the subjects upon which he now wrote had long been seething in his mind. Twenty years before he had been a member of a debating society founded by the Owenites² ; there he must have been early "brought into acquaintance with the nature of the discussion between the Co-operators and

¹ Bishop Westcott was sixty when he wrote his "Social Aspects of Christianity," and Ruskin was forty-four when he published "Munera Pulveris."

² "Life of Maurice," vol. i., pp. 75 *et seq.*

those who specially called themselves political economists.”¹ The advocates of competition and *laissez faire* were not only strong individualists; they were also strong utilitarians. Maurice, on the contrary, went for his inspiration to the first principles of theology.² This is the real key to all his teaching and all his work. It was in his Bible classes and through his sermons that he inspired his followers. He brings every conviction, indeed every opinion, to this test: Is it true to the primal verities of the Christian revelation? Of the Holy Trinity he writes: “If I have any work in the world, it is to bear witness of this Name . . . as the underground of all fellowship among men.”³ And again: “The preaching of the Trinity in its fulness will, I conceive, be the everlasting Gospel to the nations, which will involve the overthrow of the Babel polity and the brutal tyrannies as well as the foul superstitions of the earth.”⁴ Maurice believed and taught others to believe in a Heavenly Father—“a Father actually,” whose Fatherhood expressed “an actual relation to us,” not merely in “a Father about Whom we read in a book,” but “One who is always near our spirits.” He believed that “the Son is of one substance with the Father,” and that “His mind is the perfect expression of the Father’s mind”; also that “Christ the Divine Man is the Truster Himself and the Source of trust in all the race”; that “Christ’s trust in the Father is the sign and witness of His Divine nature.” He asserts that “the belief that the Son of God has interfered for His creatures and has grappled with their sin and death, is the one protection of nations and men against sloth, effeminacy, baseness, tyranny”;⁵ also that “a finished reconciliation and atonement is the one answer to the scheme of men for making atonement; if you part with it, all superstitions, all Moloch cruelties will reproduce themselves.”⁶ He bids us remember that “the Son went with

¹ “Life of Maurice,” vol. i., p. 76.

² There is an excellent explanation of Maurice’s teaching in Storr’s “Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century,” pp. 340 *et seq.*

³ “Life of Maurice,” vol. ii., p. 388.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

the Father fulfilling His will . . . we can but come . . . asking to have the Spirit of Sacrifice, and that that Spirit, Who is within us, convincing us of righteousness, of judgment, may dwell in us and quicken us to all the good works which God has prepared for us to walk in.”¹ Maurice further believed in a Holy Spirit—“a universal Spirit working in others as well as ourselves, One who must have proceeded from the Father, but Who leads us not directly to the Father, but to One Who has come to redeem us . . . and perceiving in Christ that He is the infinite and eternal Love, we are certain that the Spirit which worketh in us, the Spirit of Love, is the eternal bond of unity between the Father and the Son, as He is between us on earth.”²

Maurice was an intense “Realist” in the sense in which the term is applied to one section of the Schoolmen or Medieval philosophers;³ he confidently believed in the principle of *universalia ante rem*. To him the lesson which the true scientific worker has been learning from physical nature was true of the whole universe, and especially true in those spheres which are defined as spiritual, moral, social. He believed that all the troubles which he saw around him were due to men following their own man-made ideas, to men having set up their own principles and theories and laws and rules and customs without first asking: What are *God's* laws? What does God's revelation of Himself (and so of His Will) in Christ, and through the Holy Spirit, say to us? This teaching is especially clear in his “Sermons on the Lord's Prayer,” preached during the troublous spring of 1848. The sermon upon “Thy Kingdom Come,” in particular, is full of it. There he speaks of the persistency, in all ages and under all conditions, of the belief “that there will be, some time or other, a better order in all our relations to each other and in all the circumstances which affect us here on this planet.”⁴ Also he speaks of those who “noticing the present distractions of the world are suggesting how

¹ “Life of Maurice,” vol. ii., p. 394.

² *Ibid.*, p. 350.

³ Trench, “Medieval Church History,” pp. 271 *et seq.* Maurice was, of course, a Platonist.

⁴ P. 304.

these may be removed. All seem to assume that the constitution of things is evil ; not that we are evil in departing from it.”¹ What the religious teachers of the day ought to have said to the people was : “ There has been a holy blessed order among you, which you have been darkening, confounding, hiding from men, by your sins and selfishness ; but which must and will re-assert itself, in spite of you and all that resist it.”²

To put it in another way, what Maurice saw was that people were seeking to justify their own methods and plans without first asking God what His method was, without studying the method revealed in Jesus Christ, and then obeying that. This conviction caused Maurice to say of himself : “ I desire to labour in all ways, being most careful to choose none by self-will or from mere calculations of expediency, and to avoid none which God points out. . . . I believe whoever enters on this path . . . must have no confidence in himself, but must cultivate entire confidence in God and in the certainty of His purposes.”³ He attacked the generally received principle of unlimited competition, not from a simply humanitarian point of view, not merely because of the cruelties it perpetrated upon tens of thousands of more or less defenceless men and women, but because he saw it was contrary to God’s nature and God’s will, as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and because it severed men and set them against each other, and therefore was also contrary to the teaching and power of a holy uniting Spirit. “ Competition,” he writes to Charles Kingsley, “ is put forth as the law of the universe. That is a lie. The time has come for us to declare that it is a lie by word and deed. I see no way but associating for work and not for strikes. I do not say or think we feel that the relation of employer and employed is not a true relation. I do not determine that wages may not be a righteous mode of expressing that relation. But at present it is clear that this relation is destroyed, that the payment of wages is nothing but a deception. . . . God’s voice has gone forth clearly bidding us come forward to fight against

¹ “ Sermons on the Lord’s Prayer,” p. 311.

² *Ibid.*, p. 312.

³ “ Life of Maurice,” vol. ii., p. 10.

the present state of things ; to call men to repentance first of all, but then also, as it seems to me, to give them an opportunity of showing their repentance and bringing forth fruits worthy of it.”¹

Maurice and his followers called themselves Christian Socialists, they named the second² paper which they published the *Christian Socialist*, and they issued a series of “Tracts on Christian Socialism.” It was not that the name was applied to them by others. But as few terms have been used with a wider, indeed a looser, significance than “Socialist” and “Socialism,” it will be well to examine what Maurice himself understood by them. In a letter to Ludlow he writes : “ ‘Tracts on Christian Socialism ’ is, it seems to me, the only title which will define our object, and will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and the unchristian Socialists. It is a great thing not to leave people to poke out our object and proclaim it with infinite triumph : ‘Why, you are Socialists in disguise!’ ‘In disguise—not a bit of it. There it is staring you in the face upon the title-page.’ ”³ It is to his imaginary interlocutor that he adds : “Did we not profess that our intended something was quite different to what your Owenish lecturers meant?”⁴ This last sentence is of very great importance, for it clearly implies that Maurice saw that by the term “Christian Socialism” the principles and objects of himself and his followers would be misunderstood. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding has continued to the present day. It was because Maurice felt that the term “Christian Socialist” so exactly described the convictions and the aims of himself and his colleagues that he was not prepared to give it up. What he wished it to imply he has made quite clear. In a letter to Daniel Macmillan he writes : “Our great desire is to Christianize Socialism.”⁵ Then in a pamphlet he states : “The watchword of the Socialist is co-operation ; the watchword of the Anti-socialist is competition. Anyone who recognizes the

¹ “Life of Maurice,” vol. ii., p. 32. ² The first was “Politics for the People.”

³ “Life of Maurice,” vol. ii., p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

principle of co-operation as a stronger and truer principle than that of competition has a right to the honour or the disgrace of being called a Christian Socialist." That by Socialism Maurice did not mean compulsory Socialism—*i.e.*, that the State should take over the material and instruments of production—is abundantly clear. "Schemes for reducing all things to a common stock" were to him only attempts "for establishing a fellowship upon a law of mutual selfishness."¹ In a letter to Ludlow he writes: "The State, I think, cannot be communist; never will be; never ought to be. It is by nature and law conservative of individual rights, individual possessions."² In his fifth sermon upon the Lord's Prayer, Maurice, in reference to the so-called communism of the early Church, says: "The selling of houses and lands was only one exhibition of a state of mind—an exhibition never enforced, as St. Peter told Ananias. But the principle implied in the words, 'No man said that which he had was his own' is the principle of the Church in all ages; its members stand while they confess this principle, they fall from her communion when they deny it. Property is holy: so speaks the *Law*, and the *Church* does not deny the assertion, but ratifies it. Only she must proclaim this other truth or perish. Beneath all distinctions of property and of rank lie the obligations of a common Creation, Redemption, Humanity; and these are not mere ultimate obligations to be confessed when others are fulfilled. They are not vague abstractions, which cannot quite be denied, but which have no direct bearing upon our daily existence; they are primary, eternal bonds, upon which all others depend."³

I have dwelt at considerable length upon the "Christian-social" teaching of Maurice, because it is essential that we should understand it, if we are to have a clear grasp of the "Christian-social Movement," of which he was the actual inspirer, which is still with us, and indeed, as I have already said, is growing in influence every year. I have said nothing of

¹ "The Prayer-Book and the Lord's Prayer," p. 341.

² "Life of Maurice," vol. ii., p. 8.

³ "The Prayer Book," p. 340.

his coadjutors—Kingsley, Ludlow, Vansittart Neale, Thomas Hughes, and others—not because their work was unimportant, but because when we have once grasped Maurice's principles we can understand that which each and all were striving to achieve. Charles Kingsley's celebrated placard addressed "To the Workmen of England,"¹ was doubtless written in his own particular style; the words were his, but the principles asserted were those of Maurice. Kingsley's plain declaration of distrust in any permanent benefit from mere measures of Parliamentary reform is a clear echo of Maurice's own teaching. His final assertion that freedom will be brought about by Almighty God and Jesus Christ, and that there can be no true industry without the fear of God, is exactly what Maurice was always proclaiming.

Judged by what the world terms "practical results," so far as getting the workmen (at any rate as producers) to combine together successfully, the "Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations" was a complete failure.² First one and then another of the little societies of co-operative producers, promoted, and to a great extent financed, by Maurice and his friends, came to grief.³ The reasons for these failures were doubtless many, but certainly the chief one was that stated by the promoters in their final report—namely, the selfishness of the members. These quarrelled among themselves; they failed to look sufficiently forward, and to take a broad and Christian view of their work. But though the movement failed in its immediate results, it had far-reaching consequences. Among these was the passing of the "Industrial and Provident Partnerships Bill," which became law in the summer of 1852.⁴ But though the co-operative movement—especially as regards production—was a failure in London and in the South of England,

¹ Charles Kingsley's "Life," p. 63.

² Kingsley's "Life," p. 209; Kaufmann, "Christian Socialism," p. 75.

³ Mrs. Webb's "The Co-operative Movement," pp. 122 *et seq.* That the "Christian Socialists" were not true Socialists see Mrs. Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 154 *et seq.*

⁴ "Life of Maurice," vol. ii., p. 121.

in the North, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire, it took strong root and has grown and flourished ever since. In commending the movement to the shrewd industrial workers of the North, the followers of Maurice, particularly Ludlow, Hughes, and Neale, did yeoman service. Mrs. Webb believes that the Lancashire co-operators actually borrowed "the individualist ideal of self-employment" from these "Christian Socialists."¹ If a proof were needed of how little Maurice and his followers were either "Socialists" or "Socialistic" in the more strict, and now generally accepted, interpretation of these terms, it could be found in her indictment that "an industrial organization which substitutes for one profit-maker many profit-makers is not a step forward in the moralization of trade."² She admits, indeed praises highly, "the ethical sentiment of the highest order," which inspired the promoters; but at the same time she bids us remember that the working men who accepted their services and their capital were probably guided by a desire—a perfectly legitimate one—to better themselves, which, of course, is not in accordance with the true socialistic ideal, which would abolish all profit for individual gain.

In the warfare which was waged against the political economy then generally accepted—that is, against the principle of practically unlimited competition, one name must not be forgotten. John Ruskin had corresponded with Maurice, in connection with his "Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds," as early as 1851.³ In 1854, when Maurice founded the Working Men's College, Ruskin, who had already been writing articles on education, taxation, and other social subjects, offered to undertake the teaching of the drawing classes, and to these classes for some time he devoted himself most assiduously.⁴ I do not wish to lay stress upon Maurice's influence on Ruskin, though to deny that this existed would be not only unwise, but extremely difficult to prove. In 1857 Ruskin gave some

¹ Mrs. Webb, "The Co-operative Movement," pp. 171 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³ Collingwood, "Life of John Ruskin," p. 124.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

lectures in Manchester on "The Political Economy of Art." In these lectures he dealt with the government of a State, which, he asserted, should not be content with *laissez faire*, but should promote everything which was for the true interests of the State.¹ This proclamation of the paternal function of Government, of the right of the State to a wide range of interference, was, of course, entirely contrary to the prevailing tendency of thought at that time. From about 1860 Ruskin's faith in such experiments as the Working Men's College seemed to fail;² he began to feel that much more radical methods of reform were necessary if social welfare was to be realized.

After a period of solitude in Switzerland, passed in thinking out what these methods should be, he published "Unto this Last,"³ and, two years later, "Munera Pulveris." The preface to the first of these, in which he plainly states his purpose, contains suggestions which can only be described as socialistic—*e.g.*, "manufactories and workshops, entirely under Government regulation, for the production and sale of every necessary of life";⁴ he also advocates labour colonies, penal and otherwise, and old age pensions.⁵ Ruskin's Socialism, though in many respects extremely advanced, was, no more than that of Maurice, what usually goes under that name.⁶ His panacea for the evils he witnessed was far rather an ethical one than the promotion of any particular kind of social organization. He would interfere "no whit with private enterprise," and he believes that "if once we get a sufficient quantity of honesty in our captains, the organization of labour is easy, and will develop itself without quarrel or difficulty; but if we cannot get honesty in our captains, the organization of labour is for ever impossible."⁷ That Ruskin had already looked carefully into the existing condition of the workers is evident from his scathing criticism of Ricardo's definition of "the natural rate of wages," as that which will maintain the labourer. "Maintain him! yes, but

¹ Collingwood, "Life of John Ruskin," p. 170.

² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

³ In 1860.

⁴ P. xvii.

⁵ Pp. xviii, xx.

⁶ "Munera Pulveris," p. xxix.

⁷ "Unto this Last," pp. xv, xvi.

how?" asks Ruskin; "will you arrange their maintenance so as to kill them early—say at thirty or thirty-five on the average, including deaths of weakly or ill-fed children?—or so as to enable them to live out a natural life?"¹ In "*Munera Pulveris*," published in 1863, he exposes even more savagely what he considers to be the root-errors of the political economy then commonly accepted. He states, in the opening words of the book, that "the following pages contain, I believe, the first accurate analysis of the laws of Political Economy which has been published in England."² These words no doubt provoked many a smile in the followers of Adam Smith and Ricardo, but much that Ruskin had to say was not only entirely true, but was in desperate need of being said: such, for instance, as—"It is not the object of political economy to increase the numbers of a nation at the cost of common health or comfort; nor to increase indefinitely the comfort of individuals by sacrifice of surrounding lives, or possibilities of life."³ But it was in "*Time and Tide*" (published in 1867) that Ruskin gave the completest exposition of his views as to the nature of the ideal commonwealth. Into this teaching I must not enter, except to say that many of Ruskin's views, however much they were ridiculed when first he expressed them, are now widely accepted by those who have at heart the welfare of the poor. Where Ruskin is strongest, and where he is entirely right, is in his insistence upon ethical conditions. In the rules which should be laid down for the welfare of any society, Ruskin, like John Calvin, would go back to what he believed to be the revealed will of God, and consequently an irrefragable law. Where things were wrong it was because this law, or some part of it, had been either ignored or wilfully disobeyed. Speaking of "the true connection between wages and work," he states that it is essential "to determine, even approximately, the real quantity of the one, that can, according to the laws of God and Nature, be given for the other; for, rely on it, make what laws you like,

¹ "Unto this Last," p. 163.

² P. vii.

³ P. 3. [As Engels saw it being done in Manchester in 1844.]

that quantity only can you at last get.”¹ In the face of this teaching to deny that Ruskin was most strongly influenced by Maurice seems impossible; that he, in turn, had an immense influence upon Bishop Westcott appears equally certain. There is many a passage in Ruskin which expresses Maurice’s teaching; there are still more in Bishop Westcott’s later addresses which recall and accentuate lessons which Ruskin had been teaching twenty or thirty years before.

The period which stretches from 1848 to 1870 must be a deeply interesting one to those who are concerned in the welfare of the poor, because it was during these years that the principles of individualism, unlimited competition, and non-interference, or *laissez faire*, were attacked and finally undermined. The attack came from many sides. With the attack made by the “Christian Socialists,” who were undoubtedly aided by their literary ability, I have already dealt. The exceptional literary power of John Ruskin, also, found him an immense circle of readers, as it also did Charles Dickens, who, in novel after novel, with an extraordinary insight into human nature, exposed one existing abuse after another, and revealed to thousands what the actual conditions were in contiguity to which they were living. Another extremely strong attack came from the “humanitarians,” chief among whom were Southey, Oastler,² Michael Sadler, and, above all, Lord Shaftesbury.³ These men concentrated their efforts upon revealing the horrors and iniquities of the factory system as it then existed, and upon passing the various Factory Acts which should at least mitigate its evils. And they did not belong to the party of the Whigs or Liberals, which had been mainly instrumental in passing the Reform Bill of 1832, and the Poor Law Act of 1834. Actually they were high Tories opposed to such legislation, and who had fought against such measures

¹ “Time and Tide” (ed. 1906), pp. 15, 16.

² Author of “Slavery in Yorkshire.”

³ In “The Manchester Politician” Mr. Hertz notices four lines of revolt against the school of *laissez faire*: (1) “The Humanitarian”; (2) “The Labourer”; (3) “The Imperialist”; (4) “The Economic.” On the whole movement see Dicey, “Law and Opinion in England,” pp. 219 *et seq.*

as those removing disabilities from Roman Catholics. Lord Shaftesbury, in his private diaries, records how his bitterest opponents at that time were not the Tories, but Liberals like O'Connell, Gladstone, Bright, and Lord Brougham.¹ The student of recent social legislation and the prophet in regard to such legislation in the future may find useful food for thought in the fact that it was by men of undoubtedly Tory traditions that the first great steps in the promotion of Collectivist or Socialistic legislation, of which during the last forty years so much has been passed, were taken. That there was urgent need for such legislation no one who knows the facts can for a moment doubt. In a letter to Lord Shaftesbury, Southey writes: "Thousands of thousands will bless you for taking up the cause of these poor children [in the factories]. I do not believe that anything more inhuman than the system has ever disgraced human nature in any age or country. Was I not right in saying that Moloch was a more merciful fiend than Mammon? Death in the brazen arms of the Carthaginian idol was mercy to the slow waste of life in the factories."²

Another attack upon individualism came from what Professor Dicey terms the "Changed Attitude of the Working Classes." He shows that after the defeat of Chartism in 1848 the workmen "devoted their efforts to movements of which the object was social and not political";³ they directed their energies towards trade unionism, which "was a step in the direction of Collectivism"; for trade unionism implies collective bargaining, and puts restrictions upon individual freedom of contract. Strenuous efforts were made, and with gradual, if slow, success to alter the laws in favour of the right of workmen to combine. The workers pleaded for, and eventually won the right to bring, "the severest moral pressure to bear upon the action, and thus restrain the freedom of any workman who might be inclined to follow his own interest in defiance of union rules intended to

¹ Dicey, *op. cit.*, pp. 233 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 239. Actually they so far followed the advice of Kingsley and the "Christian Socialists."

promote the interest of all the workmen engaged in a particular trade.”¹

Two other influences at work during this period joined in the attack upon individualism. First, there was a growing sense of the value of combination in trade and commerce. The practice of combination in this sphere has, of course, in various directions grown enormously since the days we are considering, but the beginnings of it were then already at work.² Side by side with this we see various public bodies, fragments of the State and popularly elected—*e.g.*, the municipalities—becoming in different ways traders for the benefit of the community which they represent. Also during this period we see another and striking interference by the State, both on behalf of, and in the management of, great trading concerns—*viz.*, the railways of the United Kingdom. When a railway company obtains from Parliament the right of compulsory purchase of land for the public convenience, the principle that ultimately the land belongs to the nation has met with at least a measure of recognition; and when a railway has to obtain from the same authority the right to make certain charges, we have another very strong instance of State interference.³

The second influence to which I refer was that to which the Reform Bills of 1868 and 1884 were undoubtedly due, and to which the Acts in which they issued gave an enormously increased power. The causes which brought about household suffrage were doubtless many—among them being the victory of the North in the War of Secession; but the chief reason for the Reform Acts of 1868⁴ and 1884⁵ was undoubtedly a deference to the wish of the working classes “who desired, though in a vague and indefinite manner, the attainment of the ideals of Socialism or Collectivism.”⁶

Of the history of the Poor Law between 1848 and 1870 there is nothing of outstanding importance to record. The old

¹ Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 244 *et seq.*

³ Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

⁴ Passed by the Conservatives.

⁵ Which equalized the County franchise with that of the Boroughs.

⁶ Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

difficulties connected with Settlement and Removal were attacked, though never quite successfully, by more than one Act of Parliament. In 1861 an important Act¹ was passed in reference to "Union Rating," whereby certain burdens which fell heavily upon poor parishes were lightened by making these a common charge upon the Union. Another question which at this time began to claim serious attention was the appointment and payment of Poor Law medical officers—a subject which had certainly not met with the treatment due to it in the Act of 1834. Instead of a payment *per* case treated, it was decided in 1857² that medical officers "should be appointed for life, and should only cease to hold office upon their resignation, insanity, or other disqualification, or upon their removal by the Poor Law Board."³ Half their salaries were now paid by the State, and extra remuneration was given for extra services. The same subject was again raised in 1864, but a Committee appointed to consider it decided that there was no need for further regulations.⁴

Possibly the severest test to which the Poor Law was ever put was that occasioned by the Lancashire Cotton Famine of 1861 to 1863,⁵ which caused exceptional "abnormal" distress. At that time there were at least 440,000 persons employed in the trade, who were receiving some £11,500,000 a year in wages. The tremendous pressure put upon the Poor Law by the stoppage of the mills is shown by the fact that in February, 1862, the amount of pauperism in Ashton-under-Lyne, Glossop, and Preston, showed increases of 213 per cent., 300 per cent., and 320 per cent. respectively above the normal increases for that winter month. Under exceptional circumstances it is necessary to resort to exceptional measures, and during the famine two Acts were passed. By the first it was provided

¹ 24 and 25 Vict., c. 55; see Aschrott and Preston Thomas, "The English Poor Law," p. 59.

² By the "Medical Appointments Order" of May 25, 1857.

³ Aschrott and Preston Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 62.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Upon the Cotton Famine see "History of the English Poor Law," vol. iii. (Mackay), chap. xviii.

that when the poor rate in any parish in the three counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derby exceeded three shillings in the pound, the excess should be a Union charge; when it exceeded five shillings in the pound, the Poor Law Board might call upon other Unions in the county to make up the excess.¹ The second Act² was one to facilitate the execution of public works in certain manufacturing districts, etc. By this Act the Treasury was empowered to advance, out of the Consolidated Fund, sums in the aggregate not to exceed £1,200,000 to local bodies for the execution of permanent works. At that time in many of the manufacturing towns both the drainage and sewerage were imperfect, the water-supply was bad, and the roads were in an unsatisfactory state. It was thought that on these necessary works many of the unemployed, who were able-bodied, might be usefully employed. As a matter of experience only a very few operatives actually did find work under the provisions of the Act. The work was needed, and seems to have been well done, but as a means of relief the Act was not a success. It was hoped that the Act would provide employment for some 30,000 men, whereas, as a matter of fact, at the end of 1864, only some 3,978 factory operatives were working under its provisions.

It was during the period covered by this chapter that the Oxford Movement, the High Church revival, became widely influential. Of the leaders of this movement Bishop Westcott writes, "I cannot recall that they ever showed active sympathy with efforts for social reform."³ Broadly speaking, this assertion is probably correct; but at the same time it may create a false impression, because it ignores certain kinds of work which may come under the head of "social reform." If the Bishop meant that we do not find any of the earlier leaders of the High Church

¹ The Union Relief Aid Act, 1862: 25 and 26 Vict., cap. 160. This Act also gave power to the Guardians, under certain circumstances, to borrow.

² The Public Works (Manufacturing Districts) Act, 1863: 26 and 27 Vict., cap. 70; on this Act see Mackay, *op. cit.*, pp. 398 *et seq.*

³ "Lessons from Work," p. 24. [The whole context should be read.] Dicey, "Law and Opinion," p. 405, takes the same view as Bishop Westcott.

party taking a statesmanlike grasp of the evil social conditions then existing, endeavouring to penetrate into the causes of these, and then throwing themselves into a movement to remedy them, as Maurice, Kingsley, and their fellow-workers had done, his verdict is probably true. But if it implies, as it might be held to imply, that they were unconscious of, or made no effort to ameliorate, the sufferings of the poor, it is not true. What is true is, that we have to wait until the nineteenth century was drawing towards a close before we find the leaders in the High Church Movement taking that active and prominent part in social work which of recent years many of them so honourably and effectually have done.¹

¹ In a note appended to the statement quoted, Bishop Westcott writes: "The Essays in 'Lux Mundi' mark a new departure."

XV.

THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.

IN the previous chapter we saw that for many years very serious attacks, proceeding from different sources, had been made upon the principle of individualism, or non-interference (*laissez-faire*). From about 1870 a general belief in this principle was so far shattered that from this time onwards practically all legislation for the benefit of the poorer classes is inspired by the absolutely contrary principle—that of faith in State interference, otherwise Collectivism. Professor Dicey shows¹ that the acceptance of this root principle has led to a belief in four other subsidiary principles, which have been embodied in legislation with four definite objects: First, the extension of protection; secondly, the restriction of freedom of contract; thirdly, a preference for collective, as opposed to individual, action; fourthly, the equalization of advantages among individuals possessed of unequal means for their attainment. The great majority of the Acts of Parliament passed during the last forty-five years will be found to have as their purpose the promotion of one or more of these objects. Under the head of “Protection” will come the Workmen’s Compensation Acts, various Factory Acts, the Sale of Food and Drugs Acts,² etc. Under “Restrictions of Freedom of Contract” we must place certain clauses in the Agricultural Holdings Acts, which prevent the bargaining away of rights by the tenant; also clauses in the Workmen’s Compensation Acts,³ which prevent a workman con-

¹ In “Law and Opinion in England,” Lecture VIII.

² Dicey shows that “Protection” is tacitly transformed into guidance. *Op. cit.*, p. 261.

³ The number of these Acts are given by Dicey, *op. cit.*

tracting himself out of his benefits.¹ As a proof of the preference for "collective action" we may adduce the Combination Act of 1871 and various Trade Union Acts. The spirit of these Acts, which favour combinations and give Trade Unions a recognized position, is entirely opposed to that of the Conspiracy Act of 1800. As examples of Acts promoting the "Equalization of Advantages," we may certainly quote the various Education Acts, Employers' Liability Acts, and different Acts intended to promote the general health of the community. Further, it should be noticed that this Collectivist legislation is not the production of one, but of both the great political parties in the State.²

The history of the Poor Law during the last half-century is chiefly a history of various efforts to improve its administration, though from time to time attacks have been made upon the principles upon which the Act of 1834 was based, as also to reverse the policy according to which those who framed that Act desired it to be administered. In 1871 all the collective functions of the Poor Law Board, also sanitary and highway administration, and the general supervision of local authorities, were transferred to the Local Government Board.³ Both the powers and the activities of this branch of the public service have, of course, been very largely extended during recent years. One subject which has been much before the public during the period of which we are speaking, and which has provoked a large amount of both wise and unwise discussion, has been the proper spheres, or the different functions, of charity and of the Poor Law. In 1869 Mr. Goschen issued a valuable circular in which it was stated that "it is of essential importance that an attempt should be made to bring the authorities administering the Poor Laws and those who administer charitable funds to as clear an understanding as possible, so as to avoid the double distribution of relief to the same person, and at the same time

¹ "The transition from permissive to compulsory legislation bears witness to the rising influence of Collectivism" (Dicey, *op. cit.*, p. 265).

² Since 1870 Collectivist legislation has proceeded independent of the political party in power.

³ By 34 and 35 Vict., cap. 70.

to secure that the most effective use should be made of the large sums habitually contributed by the public towards relieving such cases as the Poor Law can scarcely reach.”¹ The circular goes on to point out how necessary it is “to mark out the separate limits of the Poor Law and of charity.”² The same necessity is still with us, as is also that of a clear understanding that, according to the principles of 1834, the Poor Law is not framed to deal with poverty, but with destitution. The danger of giving “relief in aid of wages,” both by those who administer the Poor Law and those who give charity, is too often forgotten. If only those who are tempted to do this would study the conditions of the English poor prior to 1834, the danger would be far less than it actually is. This circular of Mr. Goschen’s was probably the chief cause of the establishment of the Charity Organization Society, which was founded in 1869, and which is still active in London and in various provincial towns.

Among other means which have tended to better administration have been the Poor Law Conferences at which Guardians from various Unions meet annually to discuss subjects connected with their various duties.³ These began in 1871, and are now held every year in London and in various parts of the country. So impressed was the Government with their usefulness that in 1883 an Act⁴ was passed allowing Unions to pay out of the Common Fund the reasonable expenses incurred by any Guardian, or Clerk to the Guardians, attending these Conferences.

From about this time we see the beginning of a movement which of recent years has rapidly developed in two directions. On the one hand, we notice an effort to remove from the work-houses three classes of paupers, and to deal with these in special institutions. For the sick we find that Poor Law hospitals or infirmaries are provided; for the vagrants we find casual wards

¹ In 1863 the Rev. W. G. Blackie had read a paper at the Social Science Congress on “The Collisions of Benevolence and Social Law.”

² Aschrott and Preston Thomas, “The English Poor Law,” p. 90.

³ Their originator was a Mr. Barwick Baker.

⁴ 46 and 47 Vict., cap. 11.

are established ; while for the children various means are devised, either Poor Law Schools, "Scattered Homes," or a "Boarding Out System," being now generally arranged. On the other hand, as local government has become more efficient, or more paternal, we find that other branches of this service have, to some extent, taken upon themselves functions which formerly, at least to some degree, were discharged by the Poor Law ; in consequence of this there has arisen a certain amount of "overlapping," which is inimical to economy of administration. Possibly the most striking instance of this is found in connection with the treatment of the sick. In the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws of 1905 we read : "The continued existence of two separate rate-supported Medical Services in all parts of the kingdom, costing, in the aggregate, six or seven millions sterling annually—overlapping, uncoordinated with each other, and sometimes actually conflicting with each other's work, cannot be justified."¹ Another sphere of State activity in which serious overlapping is in existence is that connected with the care, health, and education of children. In regard to this, the Minority Report asserts "that it is urgently necessary to put an end to this wasteful and demoralizing overlapping by making one Local Authority in each district, and one only, responsible for the whole of whatever provision the State may choose to make for children of school age."²

The winters of 1885-86 and 1886-87 were of unusual severity, and at that time many branches of trade were depressed ; consequently, there was much unemployment and also a certain amount of reduction of wages. Unfortunately, many Unions, especially in London, proved unequal to meeting the strain which was put upon them ; workhouses became overcrowded, and the tests offered for out-relief were often unsuitable. A great meeting of unemployed—attended, unhappily, also by a large number of bad characters—was held in Trafalgar Square. The Lord Mayor of London opened a "Mansion House Fund,"

¹ Minority Report, 1909, p. 230 (8vo. edition).

² P. 169.

to which an enormous sum of money was subscribed. Those engaged in its distribution proved to be unequal to the responsibility involved. After the crisis was over it was found that the fund had had a distinctly demoralizing effect upon the poorer classes.¹ This led to the appointment of a Committee of the House of Lords in March, 1888, which was "to inquire as to the various powers now in possession of the Poor Law Guardians, and their adequacy to cope with distress that may from time to time exist in the Metropolis and other populous places ; and also as to the expediency of concerted action between the Poor Law Authorities and Voluntary Agencies for the Relief of Distress."² In their Report the Committee recognized the importance of adhering strictly to the principles of 1834 ; at the same time they made certain recommendations which would throw a very considerable increase of expense upon the local Poor Law Authorities. Just at that time a new County Government Bill for England and Wales was being framed. In this Bill³ it was arranged that through the County Authorities certain grants should be made to the Guardians for certain kinds of expenditure. As the result of further Acts, passed in 1890, additional help was given to local Poor Law Authorities ; consequently, there is available to-day for the purposes of the Poor Law, besides the yield of the local Poor Rate, a very considerable sum drawn from wider sources.⁴

The Local Government Act of 1894⁵ brought about a very considerable change in the *personnel* of many Boards of Guardians. It largely increased the electorate by which Guardians were selected, and it removed all property qualification for holding the office, which thus could now for the first time be held by a working man. Also by this Act women for

¹ Aschrott and Preston Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 101.

² *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³ Which became the Act 51 and 52 Vict., cap. 41.

⁴ By the Annual Report of the Local Government Board for 1911-12 [Cd. 3627] the amount of expenditure on relief for the last current year was £15,023,130, of which £2,451,894 came from "Grants and Government subventions," against £11,757,298 from local rates.

⁵ 56 and 57 Vict., cap. 73.

the first time "obtained a firm position on the Boards."¹ It was feared at the time that these changes might bring about a great relaxation of strictness of administration. At the first elections (in 1895), under the cry of the necessity of "humanizing the Poor Law," the Socialists tried in many localities to bring in extreme elements. But actually in only a few instances, and these mainly in large centres of population, did these extremists obtain a majority. In some cases a policy of "liberal," indeed of reckless, giving of out-relief was tried. Even where this took place the Local Government Board did not intervene, though many at the time were surprised at its inaction.² But in the event this policy, on the part of the supreme authority, justified itself. When the rates rose, and that without any corresponding improvement in the welfare of the poor, the ratepayers became indignant and demanded a return to the method of applying the workhouse test, whose usefulness had been tried by a long experience.

Of recent years there has undoubtedly been a very considerable increase of expense in connection with the Poor Law; but, except in comparatively few instances, this has not been due to a more lavish distribution of out-relief, and certainly not of this to the able-bodied. It has been much more largely due to the increased cost and the increased efficiency of administration. In London it has been especially due to the erection and maintenance of costly and exceedingly well-equipped Poor Law hospitals and dispensaries, as well as other institutions for special classes of paupers. In the country generally it has to a certain extent arisen from the appointment of a larger number of officials—Relieving Officers and others—and through appointing those who were better equipped for their work, and therefore were rightly paid higher salaries.

I cannot here deal with the large amount of recent legislation

¹ Aschrott and Preston Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

² The Board actually issued certain circulars giving very plain advice to the Guardians—*e.g.*, that of January 29, 1895, which spoke of the importance of "those who take upon themselves the office of a Guardian, discharging their duties with a due sense of the responsibility which the position involves."

which, though not directly connected with the Poor Law, must inevitably have far-reaching effects upon many who, under other circumstances, would probably have become a charge upon its funds. The laws dealing with Old Age Pensions, with Unemployment Insurance, and with Insurance against Sickness have not yet been long enough in operation for a satisfactory estimate to be formed as to their probable results. They are, of course, further instalments of that Collectivist legislation of which we have had so much in the recent past, and of which, if one can read aright the signs of the times, we are likely to see still further instalments in the future. What the ultimate effects of this legislation will be, he would be a bold man who would venture to prophesy. Probably it will lie midway between the hopes of those who expect it to produce a kind of social millennium, and the warnings of those who tell us that it will inevitably sap the energy and the power of self-effort for which, they say, Englishmen have been so conspicuous in the past.

I must now turn to consider what the Church has done for the poor during this period. Certainly she has given ample evidence of a far more intelligent and practical interest in their needs; also of a far greater sense of responsibility towards improving their condition. She has awakened to the fact that no mere attempts to palliate the sufferings of individuals, or of certain classes of individuals, can be regarded as an adequate discharge of her duty towards the poor generally. We find, at any rate among the more intelligent members of the Church, a growing effort to view what is termed the "Social Problem" as a *whole*. There is an increasing conviction of its unity, without any attempt to deny either its complexity or the interdependence of its many parts. Above all, we see a growing belief that it is unwise to attempt to divide life into separate spheres, to which we may apply such terms as "sacred," "secular," "religious," "material," "economic," or "moral." An analysis which has sometimes been pushed to a very extreme limit has proved the necessity, and not only the necessity, but the possibility, of finding also a synthesis, and that

one not of an artificial, but of a very real, nature.¹ The great majority of thinkers, however differently they may approach the problem, are agreed that the promotion of the welfare of the people, in the widest sense of the term, is the true object of the Church, and that this is an object or a work which demands their best and highest energies. The more carefully they have studied the New Testament, the more surely have they become convinced that nothing which ministers to a true social welfare can be outside the sphere of the activities of the true followers of Christ.

Among the many influences which have tended to produce this change of both view and conduct, none has been greater than that of Bishop Westcott. In 1883 he became a Canon of Westminster; in 1886 he published the addresses entitled "Disciplined Life," and in 1887 the volume entitled "Social Aspects of Christianity." In 1889 he became, upon its formation in that year, the first president of the Christian Social Union. I lay stress on these dates because a glance at a bibliography of Bishop Westcott's published works will show that before the year 1887 very little that he wrote bore *directly* upon the social problem, while of what he published after that date—the titles fill nearly three pages—everything (with the exception of the great commentaries upon "The Epistle to the Hebrews" and "The Epistle to the Ephesians,") has the closest possible reference to it. But though Bishop Westcott did not become a social *teacher* until he was nearly sixty years of age, he had been a close student of the subject almost all his life. In a letter written in 1848, when the French King lost his throne, are these sentences: "I cannot say that I feel any great indignation at the Parisian mob. They had doubtless great grievances to complain of, and perhaps no obvious remedy but to be gained by force. . . . They are indeed fearful times. There is need of a real Church amid all this confusion."² In the

¹ In this we may see a return to the method of the New Testament, where "life" is far more frequently used without a qualifying adjective than with us—*e.g.*, St. John x. 10.

² "Life of Bishop Westcott," vol. i., p. 101.

"Elements of the Gospel Harmony," written three years later, we may trace the beginnings of the teaching afterwards so fully developed in various directions on many occasions. Here we see his ability to take a wide survey of history, and to show the connection of the parts with the whole. For instance, he asserts that "the best conception of life which we can form is that of activity combined with organization, the permanence of the whole reconciled with the change of parts, a power of assimilation and a power of progress." Also he states that "Christianity cannot be separated from the past any more than from the future. . . . The Incarnation as it is seen now is the central point of all history. . . . If we regard all the great issues of life, all past history, so far as it has any permanent significance, appears to be the preparation for that great mystery, and all subsequent history the gradual appropriation of its results." From that time onwards the meaning of the Incarnation seems to have been the central subject of Westcott's study, as, later, the applications or issues of the great doctrine became the basis of all his social teaching.

Seventeen years later was preached the first of the three "Addresses on the Disciplined Life."¹ Here he showed how we may learn from the spirit of the leaders of the past, but that we must not copy either their methods or the details of their practice. Speaking of the Rule of Benedict of Nursia, he says: "Henceforth the law of social life was to be sought in self-devotion and not in self-indulgence,"² and finally he asserted that "history teaches us that social evils must be met by social organization. A life of absolute and calculated sacrifice is a spring of immeasurable power."³ I give these extracts from his earlier works to show how long the Christian solution of the social problem was seething in his mind.

But it was in the "Social Aspects of Christianity" that he first definitely dealt with the subject. The preface to this book

¹ In Harrow School Chapel, in 1868; reprinted in "Words of Faith and Hope."

² P. 9.

³ P. 14.

should be carefully read, for it is at once autobiographical and prophetic. He confesses what he owes to Comte's "Politique Positive," which he had carefully analyzed twenty years before, and also to Maurice's "Social Morality," of which he writes: "Few books can teach nobler lessons, and I should find it hard to say how much I owe to it, either directly or by suggestion." In 1890 he became Bishop of Durham, and in 1891 he delivered the well-known speech on Socialism at the Church Congress at Hull.¹ In this he states: "The term 'Socialism' has been discredited by its connection with many extravagant and revolutionary schemes, but it is a term which needs to be claimed for nobler uses. It has no necessary affinity with any forms of violence or class selfishness or financial arrangement. I shall therefore venture to employ it . . . as describing a theory of life and not only a theory of economics. In this sense Socialism is the opposite of Individualism. . . . Individualism and Socialism correspond with opposite views of humanity. Individualism regards humanity as made up of disconnected or warring atoms; Socialism regards it as an organic whole, a vital unity formed by the combination of contributory members mutually independent."²

In the following year the subject of Bishop Westcott's first charge was "The Incarnation a Revelation of Human Duties."³ In this we come to the very heart of his social teaching, and that the doctrine of the Incarnation was its chief inspiration is here made perfectly clear. The following extracts are typical: "The Incarnation of the Word of God becomes to us, as we meditate on the fact, a growing revelation of duties—personal, social, national."⁴ "We are required to prove our faith in the wider fields of social life."⁵ "As this age has been an age of physical science, so the next is likely to be an age of social science."⁶ "The Incarnation . . . hallows labour and our scene of labour. It claims the fullest offering of personal service."⁷ "For us each amelioration of man's circumstances is

¹ Reprinted in "The Incarnation and Common Life."

² P. 225.

³ Also reprinted in "The Incarnation and Common Life."

⁴ P. 43.

⁵ P. 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ P. 47.

the translation of a fragment of our creed into action, and not the self-shaped effort of a kindly nature."¹ I could quote many more such sayings, but these will be sufficient to show how much we owe to Bishop Westcott in bringing the deepest truths of the Christian creed to bear upon what must be everyday efforts of social duty.²

The first official recognition on the part of the Church of England of the importance and urgency of the social problem occurred, I believe, at the Lambeth Conference of 1888, when the Conference asked that "some knowledge of Economic Science should be required of Candidates for Holy Orders," and when Archbishop Benson, in the Encyclical Letter, stated that "no more important problems can well occupy the attention—whether of clergy or laity—than such as are connected with what is popularly called Socialism." The subject occupied a much more prominent position at the following Lambeth Conference in 1897, when it was dealt with by a special committee, which published upon it a lengthy report. In 1903 a Committee of Convocation was appointed to consider the same subject. The result of its deliberations was an excellent report entitled, "The Moral Witness of the Church in regard to Economic Questions." At the Pan-Anglican Congress of 1908, the section which dealt with "The Church and Human Society" evoked the widest possible interest. At the third Lambeth Conference, which immediately followed the Congress, the social question was again regarded as probably the most important of all the questions debated. Two of the six resolutions passed upon the subject must be remembered: No. 45 runs, "The social mission and social principles of Christianity should be given a more prominent place in the study and teaching of the Church, both for the clergy and the laity." No. 47 states that, "A committee or organization for social

¹ "The Incarnation a Revelation of Human Duties," p. 49.

² There is an admirable appreciation of Bishop Westcott's social teaching and work in Bishop Talbot's "Some Aspects of Christian Truth," pp. 303 *et seq.*

service should be part of the equipment of every diocese, and, as far as practicable, of every parish.”¹

Of recent years much excellent work has been done by various voluntary societies which have not only attacked the social problem as a whole, but also certain definite problems, more or less closely connected with poverty, from a definitely Christian point of view. The earliest of these societies, the Guild of St. Matthew, was founded by Mr. Stewart Headlam in 1877; but possibly from its extreme socialistic, and still more extreme High Church, views, it has never had a very numerous membership. By far the most important of these societies, and the one which has exerted the strongest influence upon social reform, by exposing social abuses and urging the amelioration of social conditions, is the Christian Social Union. It has been fortunate in enlisting among its officers men of exceptional influence, and who consequently have been able to claim not only a wide hearing among the more thoughtful members of the community generally, but a careful attention from those in a position of high authority in the State. Its three presidents have been Bishop Westcott, Dr. Gore (the present Bishop of Oxford), and Dr. Kempthorne (now Bishop of Lichfield), while Canon Scott Holland has from the first been the chief influence on its executive committee, and indeed the main driving force of the society. It has published an extensive literature dealing with almost every detail of the social problem in all its many branches. Perhaps the strongest proof of its influence lies in the fact that it has formed the model for all the various societies established by other Christian “Churches” to work upon similar lines towards the attainment of the same objects.

As the Christian social worker looks back over the last hundred and fifty—indeed, over the last fifty—years, and then considers the immense improvement in public opinion which has taken place in reference to the problems of poverty during

¹ The Reports of the Lambeth Conferences and the pamphlet on “The Moral Witness of the Church” are published by the S.P.C.K.

this time, he may indeed thank God and take courage. But if he is truly thankful that this public opinion is very different now from what it was even half a century ago, he is not therefore blind to still existing evils. He knows how much there is to be accomplished before all have even that "equality of opportunity" which, surely, should be their right. But the Christian social reformer can certainly now feel that at the present time "organized Christianity" is making its voice heard and its influence felt as never before. That this is chiefly due to a more intelligent perception of the meaning of the Christian Creed, and to a more practical application of its principles, there can be no doubt. The hope of a further improvement in the welfare of the poor lies in the true meaning of Christianity being still more fully understood and the responsibilities which a profession of Christianity should involve being more efficiently discharged.

ADDITIONAL NOTE (p. 40).

TITHES AND THE POOR.

UPON the question of the partition of the tithe in England there is considerable diversity of opinion, even among those who have studied the subject carefully. It must be admitted that the authority for the so-called "Canones Ælfrici" is somewhat uncertain. Actually two questions are involved: First, this particular authority; secondly, even apart from it, how far some portion of the tithe was regarded in England in the early Middle Ages as the heritage of the poor. Both questions are too large for full discussion here. I am quite prepared to admit that Lord Selborne has adduced sufficient evidence to show that these "Canones Ælfrici" must be received at least with caution. At the same time I do not think that the second question would then necessarily be answered in the negative. Hatch (in "The Growth of Church Institutions," pp. 114, 115) writes: "It would be improbable, even if no positive evidence on the point existed, that our own country, which followed closely in most other respects the movements and practices of the Churches of the Continent, should have differed from them in respect of the apportionment of tithes. But the positive evidence is clear. The authority of the enactments may be disputable, but they are at least witnesses to a current belief or tendency; and it can hardly be denied that whatever evidence exists in our own country for the payment of tithes at all in pre-Norman times exists also for their appropriation, not to the clergy only, but also to the poor." To this I would add the following from Ratzinger, "Armenpflege," p. 266: "Ich bin der Ansicht, dass die karolingische Gesetzgebung allerdings schon unter Egbert oder bald nach ihm durch Alcuin oder andere in Frankenreiche ansässige Briten in England Eingang gefunden habe und beobachtet wurde. Wenigstens findet sich im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert das karolingische System der Armenpflege auch in England durchgeführt."

Some of my readers will remember Dante, Par. xii. 93, where there occur the words "*decimas quæ sunt pauperum Dei*"; also St. Thomas, ii. 2, Q. 87, A. 3: "*In nova lege decimæ dantur clericis, non solum propter sui sustentationem, sed etiam ut ex eis subveniant pauperibus.*"

INDEX

ABBEY and Overton, 125, 142, 145 *f.*
 Abbot, Archbishop, 114
Aelfrici, Canones, 40
 Althorp, Lord, 178
 Ambrose, 47
 Ananias and Sapphira, 8
Annona Civica, 32, 44
 Apprentices, parish, 113, 126
 Aquinas, Thomas, 61
 Arkwright, 140
 Arnold, Dr., 147, 190
 Aschrott and Preston Thomas, *saepe*
 Assessment, compulsory, 95, 104
 Assessment, voluntary, 95 *ff.*
 Athelstan, King, 40
 Atonement, the, 152
 Augustine of Hippo, 46 *ff.*, 59
 Augustine, the monk, 39

Balleine, 153 *ff.*
 Basil, Saint, 53, 55 *f.*
 Beard, Charles, 80 *f.*
 Begging, 94 *ff.*, 101 *f.*, 104
 Belisarius, 53
 Benedict of Nursia, 26, 56, 215
 Benson, Archbishop, 46 *f.*, 217
 Bentham and Benthamism, 144, 177
 Bernard, St., 59
 Bethlehem (hospital), 97
 Black Death, 64 *f.*, 68, 70
 Blackie, W. G., 209
 Bridewell, 97
 Bridgewater Canal, 140
 Bright, John, 202
 Bright, Professor, 39
 Brougham, Lord, 202
 Burke, 143 *f.*
 Butler, Bishop, 143
 Buxton, T. F., 155

Calvin, 79 *ff.*, 87 *ff.*, 155, 200
 "Cambridge Modern History," 76 *ff.*
 Capitalism, 77 *ff.*
 Cartwright, 140
 Castlereagh, Lord, 165
Cellarius, the, 26
 Chalmers, 169, 171 *ff.*
 Charity Organization Society, 209
 Charity schools, 128
 Charity, theory of, 46 *f.*, 91 *f.*
 Charlemagne, 34 *f.*, 39

Chartism, 202
 Cholesbury, 175
 Christ, the teaching of, 5 *f.*
 Christian Social Movement, 196
 Christian Social Union, the, 218
 "Christian Socialist, The," 195
 Christian Socialists, the, 186, 190 *ff.*, 201 *f.*
 Chrysostom, Saint, 44, 47, 53
 Church, Dean, 32 *f.*
 Church, the Early, 12 *ff.*
 Coke (of Holkam), 141
 Collections in church, 95 *ff.*
Coloni, 33
 Combination, against, 130, 132, 157, 161, 166
 Constantine the Great, 23
 Convocation, 133, 136, 145
Copiates, 54
 Cornish, F. W., 153
 Crompton, 140
 Cunningham, Archdeacon, 64, 72, 74
 Cyprian, 17, 46

Dale, R. W., 125
 Deacons, the Seven, 7
 Debt, the National, 159
 Decretal of Gratian, 58
 Deists, the, 142
 Dicey, A. V., 147, 149, 165 *ff.*, 177, 202 *f.*, 207
 Dickens, 201
Didache, the, 16 *f.*, 44
 Dobschütz, 16, 22
 Dudden, 27 *ff.*

Early Church, poverty in the, 21
 Egbert, King, 40
 Enclosures, 66
 Engels, 175 *f.*, 200
 Epiphanius, 53
 Eucharist, the Sunday, 14
 Eusebius, 15, 18, 19
 Evangelical Movement, the, 151 *ff.*
 Exodus to the towns, 71

Fabiola, 53
 Factory Acts, 165 *f.*, 170
 Fairbairn, A. M., 87 *ff.*
 False Decretals, 58
 Feudalism, 33, 37, 57
 Fletcher (of Madeley), 153

"Forties, the Hungry," 190
 Foundling Hospital, 134
 Fowle, T. W., 180, 184
 Francis of Assisi, 59 *ff.*
 Friars, 64, 66 *f.*

Geneva, 88 *ff.*
 "Gilbert's" Act, 110, 156 *f.*, 159, 163
 Gladstone, 202
 Gore, Bishop, 4 *f.*, 218
 Goschen, 208 *f.*
 Green, J. R., 64
 Gregory the Great, 27 *ff.*, 39, 44 *f.*, 48
 Grey, Lord, 177
 Grimshaw, 153
 Grindal, Archbishop, 116
 Guilds, trade, 74

Hale, Sir Matthew, 120 *f.*
 Hallam, 112, 146
 Hargreaves, 140
 Harnack, 12 *ff.*, 50 *ff.*
 Hatch, 33
 Headlam, Stewart, 218
 Hertz, 147, 201
 Hobbes, 143
 Hobhouse, Canon, 23
 Holland, Canon Scott, 218
 Hospitals, 53 *ff.*, 73 *f.*, 96 *ff.*, 117 *f.*
 Hughes, Thomas, 197
 Hume, 143 *f.*

Incarnation, the, 2, 152, 215
 Innes, 77

James, Epistle of, 10
 Jenks, 168
 John the Deacon, 30
 Jones (of Creaton), 154
 Judaism, 42
 Julian, the Emperor, 14, 53
 Jusserand, 73

Kaufmann, 190, 197
 Kay, 140
 Kempthorne, Bishop, 218
 Kingsley, Charles, 190, 194, 197, 206

Laissez-faire, 139, 147, 164, 174 *ff.*, 191 *ff.*, 207

Lambeth Conferences, 217
 Lancashire Cotton Famine, 204 *f.*
 Latimer, Bishop, 82
 Laud, Archbishop, 114
 Leo the Great, 44
 Leonard, 74 *ff.*, 82, 96 *ff.*, 110, 113 *ff.*
 Lindsay, T. M., 84 *ff.*
 Lingard, 41
 Loch, 26, 32 *ff.*, 44, 50 *ff.*, 61
 Locke, 143
 Lucian, 13,
 Ludlow, 195, 197
 Luther, 79 *ff.*
 Lutheranism, 86 *f.*

Mackay, 181, 187 *f.*, 204
 McCulloch, 158
 Maintz, Council of, 38
 "Majority" Report, 185
 Mansion House Fund, 210
 Masterman, C. F. G., 190
 Maurice, 3, 143 *f.*, 171, 190 *ff.*, 206, 216
 Melancthon, 86
 Mendicancy, 76 *ff.*, 106
 Meredith, 65 *ff.*, 161
 Milman, 37, 58
 Milner, Joseph, 154
 "Minority" Report, 18, 189, 210
 Moffatt, Professor, 42
 Monasteries, 25, 55 *ff.*, 73, 92, 96
 Monasticism, 51 *f.*
 Münzer, 85

Neale, Vansittart, 197
 Newton, John, 153 *f.*
 New Testament, the, 5 *ff.*
 New World, discovery of the, 77 *f.*
 Nicholls, Sir George, *saepe*
 Nolan, 177

Oastler, 201
 O'Connell, 202
 Orders in Council, 112
 Origen, 46
 Overton, 128
 Owen, Robert, 169 *ff.*
 Owenites, 191

Paley, 144
 Pammachius, 53
 Pan-Anglican Congress, 217
 Papacy, the, 72, 77
Parabolani, 54
 "Parson Lot," 186
 Paul, St., 8
Pauperes Christi, 57
 Peasants' Revolt (in England), 65, 69
 Peasants' War (in Germany), 84 *ff.*
 Peter of Clugny, 58
 Peter, St., 1st Epistle of, 10
 "Politics for the People," 195
 Pollard, Professor, 80
 Poor, "impotent," 70
 Poor Law Conferences, 209
 Poor Rate, amount of, 138, 187, 211
 Population, 137 *f.*
 Portus (Oporto), 53
 Price of Corn, 103, 117, 134, 149, 160, 186
 Privy Council, 112
 Prophets, the Hebrew, 4
 Propitiation, 43
 Purgatory, 48

Ratzinger, *saepe*
 Reform Act, 146, 177, 203
 Reformation, the, 76 *ff.*
 Relief, municipal, 74
 Religion and Relief, 19 *f.*
 Ricardo, 148

Ridley, Bishop, 82, 97 *f.*
 Riot Act, 130
 Rogers, Thorold, 66, 137
 Romaine, 153
 Ruskin, 191, 198 *ff.*
 Russell, Lord John, 190

 Sabatier, Paul, 59
 Sadler, Michael, 201
 Salvian, 49
 Savery, 140
 Savings Banks, 174
 Scarlett, 177
 Serfdom, 62, 66
 Servetus, 88
 Settlement, Law of, 68 *f.*, 119 *f.*, 122, 204
 Shaftesbury, Earl of, 155, 201 *f.*
 Smith, Adam, 148
 Socialism, 169 *f.*, 195, 198, 203, 212, 216
 Socialism (German), 86
 Socialistic legislation, 170, 202
 Sociology, 89
 Southey, 201 *f.*
 Southwell, 178
 Speenhamland Act, 158, 163
Sportula, 32
 Statute of Labourers, 63 *f.*, 67 *f.*, 161
 Statute of Merton, 66
 Storr, Canon, 192
 Symmachus, 53
 Syncretism, 42

 Talbot, Bishop, 217
 Talmud, 43
 Theodore, Archbishop, 40
 Thomas Aquinas, 61
 Thornton, Henry and John, 154
 Tithe, 33 *f.*, 38, 40

Towns, growth and decay of, 66 *f.*
 Toynbee, 141, 147 *ff.*
 Trade (per head), 138, 174
 Trench, 63, 193
 Trevelyan, 65, 69
 Trinitarian Controversy, 142
 Trinity, the Holy, 2, 9, 192
 Truck, 126

 Uhlhorn, 21, 24 *ff.*
 Unemployment, 16 *f.*
 Utilitarians, 144

 Vagabondage, 69 *f.*, 99, 111
 Vagrancy, 16 *ff.*, 96 *f.*, 101 *f.*, 135
 Venn, 153
 Verdun, Treaty of, 36
 Villeinage, 69 *ff.*

 Wages, 68, 71, 104 *f.*
 Walker, Samuel, 153
 Walpole, 125, 136, 145
 Warner and Marten, 133
 Watt, James, 140
 Wat Tyler, 69
 Webb, Mrs., 169 *ff.*, 197 *f.*
 Wesley, 128, 150 *ff.*, 163
 Westcott, Bishop, 3, 60, 169, 191, 201, 205, 214 *f.*
 Whitfield, 153 *f.*
 Whitgift, Archbishop, 116
 Wilberforce, William, 151, 154
 Work, Right to, 17
 Workman, Dr., 59, 62, 72
 Wycliffe, 69

Xenodochia, 29, 52 *ff.*

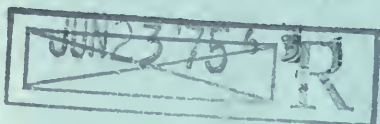
INDEX OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES

	PAGE		PAGE
P ^s . xvii. 15 ...	43	A ^c ts xvi. 19 <i>f</i> .	8
P ^r ov. xv. 27 ...	47	„ xix. 26 <i>ff</i> .	8
„ xvi. 6 ...	47	„ xx. 28 ...	12
S ⁱ rach iii. 30 ...	43, 47	„ xxiv. 17 ...	8
„ xxix. 9-11 ...	43	R ^o m. xi. 36 ...	9
T ^o bit xii. 9 ...	43	„ xii. 13 ...	15
		„ xii., xiii. ...	9
M ^a tt. vi. 2-4 ...	43	1 C ^o r. iii. 11 ...	48
„ x. 8 ...	5	„ ix. 7 <i>ff</i> .	15
„ xiii. 20 ...	6	E ^p h. iv. 28 ...	55
„ xxiii. 8 <i>ff</i> .	13	1 T ^h ess. iv. 11 ...	55
L ^u ke vi. 20 ...	5	2 T ^h ess. iii. 8, 11 ...	55
„ vi. 36 ...	14	2 T ^h ess. i. 6, 12 ...	10
„ viii. 12 ...	6	2 T ^h ess. iii. 10, 13 ...	9
„ xv. 14 ...	5	1 T ⁱ m. iii. 2 ...	12
J ^o hn v. 17 ...	9	„ v. 18 <i>f</i> .	15
„ x. 10 ...	5, 214	H ^e b. x. 32 <i>ff</i> .	18
„ xiii. 34 ...	13, 14	„ xiii. 2 ...	15
„ xiii. 35 ...	10	1 P ^e t. ii. 9 ...	10
A ^c ts vi. 3 ...	7	„ iv. 9 ...	15
„ xi. 27 <i>f</i> .	15	J ^u de 12 ...	12

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16
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